THE
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The
Concordia Pulpit
for 1930

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FOREWORD.

THE PROBLEM.

The preacher must produce.

Again and again he must arise in public, — "and the eyes of all them that were in the synagog were fastened on Him," — now deliver, not words, words, words, and sounds merely, but the truth of spirit and life, which penetrates, arouses, feeds, sustains, satisfies, and produces response.

If a great multitude is present — what an opportunity! What an opportunity to strike a telling blow and to justify expectation!

If a faithful few only are there — how discouraging! But just then the pastor needs to be prepared to do his best, so that the empty pews, the small number, and even other untoward circumstances, if such there be, may not throw a chill upon him and upon the entire audience. Just at such times, when all seems bleak, the preacher is to do his best, — no weak and sniveling complaint about the few present. There were very few present when Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." Matt. 17, 4. There was only one in the audience, and that a most humble — not to say worse — listener, when Jesus spoke at Jacob's Well; but that one went out and brought in a whole city of hearers. There were only two in the congregation when Jesus, on the way to Emmaus, "opened up the Scriptures" and made those hearts burn.

Whatever the place, and though it be as humble as the stable in which Jesus was born, though it be as bleak as some stony hill in arid Palestine, the preacher is to do his utmost "that he may please Him who has chosen him," — that he may hear the Master say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things." Matt. 25, 21.

But "who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. 2, 12.

THE SOLUTION.

To do his best, the preacher needs help. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." 2 Cor. 3, 5.

God uses *means* to help the preacher. At rare intervals he, the preacher, may hear other preachers and benefit by what he

sees and hears; but his chief help comes from reading and study. Therefore Paul wrote to Timothy: "Give attendance to reading." 1 Tim. 4, 13. A successful business man has said: "I never got far till I stopped imagining I had to do everything myself." Wanting to do everything yourself comes from pride, and "God resisteth the proud."

No general was ever so great but he needed the help of the common soldier. Luther was a great reader of others — *Non multa, sed multum.* He read the best that he could lay hands on in his day — the Bible and Augustine. Luther knew that he needed others. He would never have produced that beautiful little letter to his son Hans if Hans had not helped him. A good preacher gets help from almost every one and everything, but books are his chief aids. Even Jesus did not preach without the help of books. And Paul was very anxious to have the books and parchments. 2 Tim. 4, 13.

Cooperation, team-work, is effective and is commanded by God. One man can make an excellent outline, another supplies the felicitous phrase and the fluent diction, and another one delivers the sermon better than either of these.

That preacher has made no little progress who knows how to use helps.

HINTS.

Do not expect too much of a book. No book can give you your delivery, and delivery — I had almost said — is everything. *Actio in dicendo una dominatur,* said an eloquent speaker. There should be clean, exact, and correct articulation, especially of the consonants. And there must be a *reasonable* modulation of the voice, — not that of the wailing, chanting priest, but that of the preaching prophet. Paul used no pulpit tone when he said: "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Acts 26, 29. No salesman uses a pulpit tone when he wants to sell goods. No teacher uses the pulpit tone when he teaches arithmetic.

The delivery is the dress of the sermon. It is to be neither gaudy nor slovenly. If your delivery is not all that it should be, get some advice on this subject, not from a mountebank, but from one who knows whereof he speaks. The preacher is not an actor, he is not a lecturer, he is not an auctioneer, he is not a schoolteacher, he is not a spell-binder in a political campaign, he is not

a chautauqua entertainer, but he must know some things which all of these men practise.*

Do not expect too much of the book. Do not demand that all material in it be equally excellent, and do not make the mistake of imagining that there is nothing to it because you do not see it at first glance. Look at it again and again. Remember that for over a thousand years no one did much with the 46th Psalm, but Luther made one of the greatest hymns of all times out of that psalm. God answered his prayer: "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law." Ps. 119, 18. And even Luther made little of Job 7, 16, but Muehlenberg saw in it his famous hymn.

This book supplies you with material in advance of the time for its use. That gives you an excellent opportunity to study, to meditate, to compare, to add, to eliminate, to change, or to adapt to your conditions and purposes.

God bless — as He alone can bless — those who have labored to help us in this all-important work of preaching, and God bless all who proclaim His truth! MARTIN S. SOMMER.

St. Louis, Mo., August 13, 1929.

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* *Physical Training of Public Speakers*, by Martin S. Sommer (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.; 65 cts.), has helped many a young minister to be a better preacher.

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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES.

OUTLINES ON THE STANDARD GOSPEL-LESSONS.

First Sunday in Advent.

Matt. 21, 1—9.

Most of you, in coming here to-day, were aware of it that a new church-year is beginning and were bestowing some thought on this point. With the first Sunday in Advent a new church-year opens. We have a civil year and an ecclesiastical year. On New Year's Day, which ushers in the civil year, we are thinking largely of our position in this world, our life here on earth, our daily bread, our duties as citizens, etc. When we enter upon a new church-year, our thoughts are well-nigh exclusively concerned with matters that pertain to our spiritual well-being. We contemplate our position in the kingdom of God, the invitation to use the means of grace, the many Sundays and festivals that will come with their services, each one like an oasis in a dry land. With things of spiritual import, things that have to do with our relation to God and the Savior, we shall occupy ourselves this morning as we ponder the old, but ever new Advent message of the text: —

Thy King is Coming.

1. The coming of our King is a fact.
2. It means great blessings for us.

1.

Advent means coming, approach. In speaking of the advent of Jesus, we distinguish three comings of His. One lies in the past, one in the present, and one in the future. The first is His coming in the flesh, when He assumed our humanity. The second is His spiritual coming, through the means of grace. The third is His coming on the Day of Judgment. We wish to-day to think particularly of that coming of our Lord which takes place in the present time, His spiritual coming. Let us see that here we are dealing with a great fact.

The text speaks of the coming of Jesus into Jerusalem. It was a remarkable coming, a great advent, when He, amid the shouts of the people, rode into the royal city of Jerusalem on a humble animal, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." One thing is plain and really requires no long discussion, namely, that coming into Jerusalem is a solid, historical fact. All four evangelists relate it, all four dwell on it with a goodly amount of detail. Their accounts are not only true, judged by historical standards, but they are inspired, for these men wrote those things that

the Holy Ghost was teaching them. Hence we may rest assured that the events recorded in our text actually took place.

Let this remind us that the coming of Jesus to-day is also a reality. True, we cannot see it. There is no visible procession, with Him at the head, drawing near, so that we could feast our eyes on Him and, seeing Him, hail Him as our King. For this reason many people call all references to the spiritual coming of Jesus fantastic talk. They speak of an illusory mysticism, of which we are said to be guilty, and they are wondering that people in the twentieth century can take interest in something that no one can see or observe or photograph or study by means of a microscope and chemical analysis.

However, many things are true even though they lie beyond the reach of our senses. All the great realities of our soul-life and of the spirit-world can be thought of here. Let us pray God that we may be kept from the folly of those people who accept nothing but that which they can see. Children enjoy their father's and their mother's love. But you cannot find this love in the human heart if you search for it by means of scientific instruments, dissect the body, analyze the brains, etc. Still we know that love is there.

That there is such a thing as the coming of Jesus at the present time we know from indisputable evidence, namely, from His own Word. To His disciples He says: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It was at the time when He was withdrawing from them His visible presence that He spoke these words. The meaning is: Be not sad when you see Me depart. I shall be with you at all times. And that this was meant to hold good for their successors as well as for themselves He indicates by adding: "even unto the end of the world." "I shall come again," He says in the Gospel according to St. John. Furthermore He states: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." In Revelation we read these beautiful words: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will hear My voice and open the door, I shall come in to him and sup with him and he with Me." Thus the coming of Christ as taking place to-day is witnessed to by unmistakable statements in the Scriptures.

Invisible it is, but real. It is a coming to our soul. Jesus gets in touch with our spirit and thus establishes a connection with us. We cannot understand it, but a fact it is nevertheless.

But note that it is a coming in the Word and in the Sacraments. There is an error against which we have to be warned, *viz.*, that our Lord Jesus will come in some ineffable way, without any means. Christ does not have to use a bridge in order to reach us, people have argued. Since He is almighty, He can approach us without a connecting medium. On this point there has been one of the great doctrinal debates in the Protestant Church. The view that Jesus will

come without any particular means was held by Zwingli and Calvin and their followers. This view our Church has always opposed. It does not deny the almighty power of Christ and His ability to approach us in many different ways, but it holds that here the promises of Christ must be considered and that, according to these promises, His advent is accomplished through definite means, namely, through His Word and the Sacraments.

You will ask me for proof. There are many passages in the Scriptures that we can here think of. In the gracious words of Jesus quoted before from Revelation, He says: "If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him." You have to hear the voice, the Word, of Jesus. If you do so, then there is contact between you and Him. Of Baptism, St. Paul says that as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ. We see that in Baptism the closest intimacy with Jesus is established. You come as near to Him as you do to a garment that you put on. Of the Lord's Supper we know that in it Jesus gives us Himself, His body and His blood. How can any closer communion with Him be conceived of? The Scripture evidence, then, teaching and confirming that Jesus comes to us in the means of grace, is very clear. And there is no evidence that He will come to us in some other way. Whoever entertains the view that Jesus will approach him by a different road is following his own fancy instead of the clear statements of the Lord.

But how insignificant a coming! some one says. Merely in the words of the Bible, merely in the simple ceremonies of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper? That seems incredible! Friend, think of the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem. Of the many thousands who were gathered there on that day hardly one, if asked beforehand as to the way in which the King of Israel would be likely to enter the portals of the ancient royal city, would have said that He would come riding on the foal of an ass. Almost to a man they would have given expression to glowing anticipations of pomp and splendor. How different, therefore, was the advent of the King from the way the multitude expected it to be! Let us here be reminded that God's ways are not our ways. He says (Is. 55, 8. 9): "For My thoughts are not your thoughts," etc. God often uses insignificant means to accomplish His great purposes. Instead of being offended, let us praise Him for coming to us as He does.

2.

Blessings were expected from Jesus when He entered Jerusalem as King. The multitudes would not have gone out to meet Him with songs and palm-branches if they had not entertained the hope that His advent meant great things for them. What blessings they looked forward to we can gather from a number of passages. In their opinion the King whom they were welcoming would free their people from

the odious Roman yoke, reestablish the ancient kingdom of David and Solomon, and usher in a golden political era for Israel, making it evident to the whole world that the descendants of Abraham were chosen by God to be at the head of all nations.

A glance at the procession headed by Jesus might have shown these people how mistaken they were. Jesus came in a lowly manner, riding on a humble beast of burden, surrounded by a handful of uninfluential, poor followers. All this manifested that He did not come to overthrow the government of the Romans and to establish Himself as the political king of the Jews. His appearance ought to have dispelled the thought that He approached to bring blessings through war and bloodshed, through the gathering of legions of soldiers, and the inauguration of a splendid outward administration.

And still their greeting was justified, although in a sense not understood by them. Blessings He was bringing, blessings far greater than the people who greeted Him knew. The multitude addressed Him as the Son of David. V. 9. That was the title of the Messiah, the Christ, which term means "the Anointed." The whole New Testament testifies that Jesus is this person, the anointed King of Israel. To understand what blessings this King is bestowing, you have to read Is. 53, where He is spoken of at length. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," we there read. He brings to His subjects freedom from sin, reconciling them to God. How gloriously is not all this spoken of in the New Testament! We may hear this message in the words of Jesus, found Matt. 11, 28—30: "Come unto Me," etc. He is there speaking as a King, for He makes mention of a yoke. But it is a light yoke. To have Him as King means to have rest, peace, joy, because He has satisfied divine justice, which had to condemn us on account of our sins.

The hosanna cry must be noted. The meaning of the people is: Hosanna we sing to the Son of David. They offer Him the homage found Ps. 118, 25. 26. It is a distinct recognition of Him as the Messiah. Hosanna means, "Furnish help." And help He is giving, help against our most violent enemies, sin, death, and the devil. The situation to-day is the same as in those days. People feel that they are in distress and want, but just what constitutes the source of all their trouble most men do not realize. They are like children who are crying without being able to tell just what is hurting them. Be assured that here comes the King who is offering, not a superficial remedy, but a means curing our ailment at the very root.

Perhaps some one will say: I can understand that Jesus brought peace when He entered Jerusalem because He came to suffer and die for our sins. But what is He offering to us nowadays? Do we still need His coming? Do we still require such a King? O friend, you might just as correctly argue that, since we have a constitution guaranteeing to us rights and privileges, we no longer need a pres-

ident. It is equivalent to saying that a full-grown man no longer needs food and drink. We have spiritual wants every day, and they must be supplied. We sin daily and therefore need forgiveness; our King brings it to-day as He comes to us in His Gospel. We need the Holy Spirit; our King bestows that heavenly gift when He enters our heart. We need strengthening of our faith; our King comes for that very purpose. We need warm, strong impulses to do that which is right and good; our King plants in us this willingness and eagerness to walk in the paths of God, to do what is acceptable in His sight. We need comfort in dark hours; the King comes and gently whispers to our drooping spirits and binds up the broken heart. We need courage to withstand temptations; the King makes us strong, so that we can resist the attacks of the enemy.

Let us, then, welcome our King to-day, gratefully accepting His blessings. And not only to-day, but throughout the church-year upon which we are entering let the shout go up from our hearts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" May we all become more diligent in meeting Him when He is standing ready to bless us, namely, in the means of grace! W. ARNDT.

Second Sunday in Advent.

Luke 21, 25—36.

Will this world endure forever, or will the time come when the present order will be destroyed? There are scientists who say that their study of the forces of nature leads them to think that the present universe will not last forever, that by and by there will be a terrific crash, due to the liberation of gigantic forces of nature, and that the world will be destroyed. The religions of some of the ancient nations taught that the present universe would not be eternal. There were representatives of Greek and Roman religious thought who predicted a universal conflagration, which would prove utterly destructive to the order of things under which we are living now. Our heathen forefathers in Central and Northern Europe spoke of the so-called *Goetterdaemmerung,* "the dusk of the gods," which would come in the future and involve the ruin of everything existing now. — An authoritative answer to the question under consideration is given us in God's Word. The text before us says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." That settles the question for us. The text makes it plain that there is coming an awful convulsion of nature, a catastrophe without parallel, and that it will mean the passing away of the visible universe, of heaven and earth. We cannot afford to be indifferent in respect to this matter. When the crash does come, we know it will not mean annihilation for us, but our appearing before the judgment-seat of

the great God and our entering either upon heavenly joy or into a world of eternal woe. In our text the one phase of the subject that is given prominence is that which refers to the signs that are to precede the coming of the Last Day. We are told that there will be such signs, and they are pointed out to us. Let us limit ourselves to the question, —

What Must Be Our Attitude toward the Signs of the Last Day Mentioned in Our Text?

1. We should observe the signs. *2. We should heed their warning.*

1.

It is one of the acts of mercy of our heavenly Father to ordain that certain signs are to announce the coming of the Last Day. If He had not told us of such signs, could we have found any fault with Him? But He had compassion on us and decided to send us warnings, signs to indicate that the final catastrophe is impending. Certainly the least for us to do is to be looking for, and to observe, those signs. It is this attitude which is described in the words of Jesus: "Behold the fig-tree and all the trees," etc. In other words, our eyes are to be open, so that these signs will not remain unobserved when they occur.

Is it true that in discussing these signs we are really speaking of something sent by God? The signs mentioned in the text are to take place in nature. Cf. vv. 25. 26. Can we, then, say that they come from God? The text does not mention this specifically. Yes, but recall the account in the first chapter of the Bible telling of the creation of the universe, saying that sun, moon, and stars shall be for signs. In the light of the narrative in Gen. 1 we shall not doubt that the signs spoken of are due to the arrangement given to the forces of the universe by the Creator.

Enemies of the revealed truth have said that these signs are nothing but natural phenomena; who would be so credulous as to attach any significance to them? It is true that we have seen the things that are predicted here come to pass: eclipses, falling, or shooting, stars, comets, tempests, tidal waves. In many cases their causes can be established, and their coming can frequently be determined in advance. Does that prove that they are not signs? Not at all. What does it mean that something is a sign of the Last Day? Simply this, that God has given it this significance, that whenever it occurs, it should flash forth to us the warning: Judgment Day is approaching. We know that an eclipse of the moon is due to the fact that the earth holds a position directly between the sun and the moon and intercepts the light of the former; but, being Christians, we likewise know that our heavenly Father has so arranged the universe that these eclipses will come about and teach us the important lesson

that the world will not endure forever. This matter is beautifully illustrated by the sign that God gave to Noah and His descendants, namely, the rainbow, to assure them that He would not send another universal flood. The rainbow is a natural phenomenon and can easily be explained, and still it is a sign given by God and invested with a special significance.

Some people hold that the signs of the coming of the Last Day will be something so extraordinary and sensational that everybody will be able to see that the end is approaching. They are not willing to believe that our Lord is referring to occurrences that have taken place and that will continue to take place. Is that view correct in the light of our text? It is not. There is nothing here that says that these occurrences in nature never happened before the last period. The Lord says, on the one hand, that there will be signs and that the people will be distressed and perplexed. On the other hand, He says that the Last Day will come as a snare upon the people living on earth, that it will surprise them. Evidently, then, the signs announcing His coming will not be of so extraordinary, so remarkable a nature, that everybody will at once see their significance. Let us here think of the request of the Jews to be given a sign that Jesus was the Messiah. He had been giving them signs day after day, healing the sick, preaching the Gospel, etc. These did not satisfy them, and they asked for a sign from heaven; but Jesus told them that no sign would be given to them but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

The ancients had an allegory of a man who had made a contract with death that the latter was not to appear until he had sent three messengers. The man felt quite secure and gave no thought to his death. One day he fell ill; the doctor had to be called and pronounced his condition serious. His wife told him that his looks were alarming to her. Asking for a mirror, he himself corroborated the judgment of his wife. Still he did not feel any anxiety because he thought that death would have to send his three messengers before he could approach him. All of a sudden the dreaded visitor entered. When the man remonstrated, death pointed to his three messengers: the physician, the wife, and the man himself. He had been given the promised warnings, but had not taken note of them and not recognized them as such. Let us not make the mistake of overlooking the signs of the Last Day which God places about us in such abundance.

2.

We must, however, not merely observe the signs; we must heed the warning they bring to us. Just as there is a vast difference between learning the Word of God and following its sacred precepts, so a great difference obtains between observing the signs of the Last Day and doing what they would tell us to do. With respect to this

matter we can divide mankind into three classes: those who do not even observe, but seeing, do not see, and hearing, do not hear; secondly, those who are observing, but without any good results; thirdly, those who observe and follow up the observation with the proper preparation. The three classes come before our mind here. The Lord says, v. 34: "Take heed to yourselves," etc. These words well describe the unobserving, blind multitude. Of the second class we are reminded in the words: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." This class consists of those who know and there stop. Knowledge, information, is indispensable, but it alone will not suffice. And, finally, He says to His disciples: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always," etc. V. 36. Here to the knowing is added the watching, the praying. These words describe the people of the third class.

When Noah was building the ark, there must have been these three sorts of people: those who saw him build, but made no inquiries as to what he was doing; those who saw and inquired, but continued to remain in their wickedness; and those who inquired and went into the ark with Noah — the members of his family.

May God grant that we do not belong to the first class, described v. 34! May He grant that we do not belong to the second class, which knows, but does not profit by its knowledge! Let us anxiously strive to be watching and praying. Can we deny that the signs mentioned in the text have happened very often and that hence the pointer on the clock is not far from twelve, that midnight may be here very soon, and that, before we leave this building, the Son of Man may come in the clouds of heaven?

Watch and pray. Watch that you may be prepared when the Lord comes. Pray. This points to the character of the preparation. You must pray for it. It has to come from above; you cannot accomplish it yourself. We are sinners, we have to be cleansed of the iniquity clinging to us before we can face the great Judge. There is a cleansing water prepared for man, the blood of Immanuel, and we must pray that it be applied to us. It is a blood which, though shed for all, benefits the believers only. Pray that God may keep you as a believer amid all the distractions, the dangers, the indifference, the unbelief, and the enmity against God and Christ, the manifold manifestations of sin and wickedness in these last days. Watch and pray, not sporadically, but always, not in church merely, but in your homes and at work. Then you will not merely be observing the signs of the approach of the Last Day, but you will be heeding their lesson in the proper way, and when the evil catastrophe does set in and the whole world comes to its end, you will joyfully lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh. Shall we not pray that that day may come soon? Cf. Rev. 22, 20.

W. Arndt.

Third Sunday in Advent.

Matt. 11, 2—10.

We here have a true Advent text. He that should come is spoken of, the Messiah, whose coming had been prophesied in the writings of the Old Testament. John the Baptist, in prison, hears of the wonderful works of Christ and sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus the question, "Art Thou He," etc. We ask, Did John not know that Jesus was the Messiah, or did he doubt? Did he need this information? It seems incredible that he sent to Jesus to receive information for himself. He knew through direct revelation from God at the baptism of Jesus that Jesus was the Messiah. (Cf. also vv. 7—10 of our text.) He must have sent this embassy on account of his disciples, who were in need of instruction. Jesus does not answer the question of John directly, but He answers it far better than if He had merely said yes. He answers by pointing to His works. Judge for yourselves, He says, at it were. "The blind see," etc. After having in this manner replied to John's question, Jesus says: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." A very significant word. It is this word on which I should like to place special emphasis this morning. Let us try to grasp the meaning, the import, of it.

1.

The meaning of the word is plain: "Blessed is the man who is not disappointed when he looks at Me and who will not in such disappointment reject Me." But why should anybody be disappointed in Jesus? Christ appeared to be a mere prophet, but not a great King, as the Scriptures had prophesied that the Messiah should be. He was poor, He wore no crown, He bore no scepter, the circumstances of His life were humble. How could He be the Promised One, being so lowly? Was there not, after all, some fatal error lurking somewhere in this matter? These questions were bound to arise in the minds of John's disciples.

Similar questions arise in our minds to-day. Jesus is preached to us in the Scriptures as the great King, but does He show Himself as such? We have His Word, but He remains invisible. Our hearts fear and quake and tremble, doubts arise, but the King does not appear. The unbelievers taunt and mock, and still the King does not show Himself. This situation is so distressing to many that they feel offended and say, We refuse to believe in such an invisible being, who remains hidden. "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." Christ tells us that His kingdom is invisible, **spiritual.**

2.

Probably the disciples of John expected to see Jesus at the head of an army, getting ready for a battle with the enemy. What did they find? A small band of disciples, who did not at all present

a formidable appearance. Was that His whole force? What a weak Messiah! — Here is one of our greatest stumbling-blocks. Jesus has His followers, but who are they largely? Not the wise and mighty, not the powerful and wealthy, but chiefly the poorer classes, those who are not so prominent. We frequently observe that, when a man becomes mighty and wealthy, he falls away. The words of Paul are true to-day, 1 Cor. 1, 26: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Blessed is he that is not on this account offended in Jesus!

3.

If the disciples of John had an opportunity to watch the twelve apostles for any length of time, they found in them great imperfections: pride, love of self, sinful ambition. Is their Master, then, the Messiah? Here was another fruitful source of offense. What a sad story we have to tell here! We look upon those who profess to be followers of Jesus, and we find that so many fail to show the spirit of love and charity, of forbearance and fairness, of helpfulness and mercy toward the weak and the erring. Far oftener do we see pride and superciliousness, the display of evil passions and ambitions, and often these things manifest themselves under the cloak of religion and parade as something holy. We notice strife and dissension among those who ought to love each other. Lest we be carried away by a wave of bitter judgment of others, let us take a mirror and look at ourselves. We shall see that we are exhibiting the same qualities which we are criticizing. Oh, it is true that the many sins of Christians, their slowness in doing good works, their unwillingness to measure up in their lives to their great profession, are strong reasons why many people will not accept Jesus. How often do we hear it said that people will not join the Church because its members are so very different from what they ought to be! When we are in danger of being offended in Jesus on this head, let us remember that He has foreseen these difficulties and that He stands before us and says: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." Remember, you are not believing in His followers, you are believing in Him.

4.

The messengers of John could not help reflecting with pain and sorrow on the fact that their great teacher now had been languishing in prison for probably more than a year, and, behold, the man whom they are to consider as the Messiah does not order them to bring John the reassuring information that soon the dungeon walls would be broken down and he would be set free. No promise of that kind is given them to carry back to their master. Here there was a circumstance that mystified and probably offended them. And what

must have been their thoughts when John finally had to bow down in prison and was beheaded? They certainly stood in need of that admonition: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." We, too, have many tribulations, and much evil is harassing us. We anxiously look for light and help, but it seems to be very slow in coming. Many a Christian languishes on a sick-bed that has held him for weeks and months. His prayers apparently are not answered. Another one has a disobedient son or daughter. His supplications, it seems, are without avail. If Jesus is the Messiah, the great God, why does He not help? But He says: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me." His ways are not our ways. He knows what is best for us.

5.

Among the things that Jesus bids the disciples of John observe was the preaching of the Gospel to the poor. We know what Jesus preached. He spoke to the multitudes of sin and grace; having described the sternness of God's Law, He pictured to them the love of the heavenly Father, who is not willing that anybody should be lost and who was sending a Redeemer to bear the sins of men. It was a glorious message, and there were many poor sinners who accepted it with joy. Oh, how important the warning to John's disciples not to become offended at it! Just this message of Christ does not appeal to the proud heart of man. Blinded by sinful pride, natural man will not admit that he must have a Redeemer who will pay for his sins and shortcomings. Witness the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees. — We need that warning addressed to the disciples of John to-day. The message of Jesus can briefly be described as the Gospel for the poor. According to the promptings of our unconverted heart we wish to reach heaven through our own powers. "Let every tub stand on its own bottom," the wisdom of man says. Friends, when our Old Adam rises in protest against the Gospel truth of salvation through faith in Christ, not through works of our own, then let the words of Jesus resound in our minds: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me."

Again, from another point of view, it must have seemed offensive to the disciples of John that the Gospel was preached to the poor. Jesus was "receiving publicans and sinners," as the Pharisees murmured. He was not fasting, as the disciples of John did. It may be that the objection arose in them that He was encouraging licentiousness, transgression of the holy Law of God, a free and easy attitude toward sin. Looking about them, they may have seen in the company of Jesus many who formerly had been notorious for disobeying the commandments of God. Was He not encouraging sin? Such thoughts, if they entertained them, were, of course, altogether unjustified; for wherever the Gospel does really enter the heart, it creates a new being, changing the person thoroughly and making

him a child of God, whom he now will serve in true gratitude and love. But there is no denying that they, being austere in their mode of life, needed this warning. The charge is heard to-day that the very Gospel-message harms the cause of true morality and encourages sinners to continue on their wicked path. If our proud heart should ever join in such criticism, then let us hear the Word of Jesus: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me."

On the other hand, the disciples of John may have heard that Jesus, just a short time before, namely, in the Sermon on the Mount, had said: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." This might have seemed very severe to them and proved a rock of offense. Is not this one of the chief objections against the Lutheran Church to-day, that it is so strict, that it opposes membership in sinful societies, that it will not permit participation in sinful amusements, that it refuses to ignore any part of God's Moral Law? This is the position of Jesus. He is a Friend of sinners, but not of sin. He solemnly says: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled." If we feel in ourselves the urge to leave Jesus because He will not permit us to follow our carnal desires, if His Word becomes distasteful to us because it does not grant a license to serve the flesh, then let us remember that He said: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me."

Finally, in the Gospel of Jesus there are many things which the human intellect cannot understand or grasp. If the disciples of John listened for a little while, they heard such things. Many people left Jesus because they felt offended at His doctrine, inasmuch as it surpassed their powers of comprehension. Can we deny it that here we have one of the great sources of enmity against Jesus and His teaching? He refers to things that are beyond our human ken and knowledge, and hence His message is not acceptable to our carnal reason. Think of the doctrine of the Trinity, of Baptism, of the Lord's Supper, of the two natures in Christ, etc. When doubts arise in our minds on this score, then let us listen to Him, saying: "Blessed is he that is not offended in Me."

The day will come when we shall bless our Savior for warning us so gently not to be offended in Him. When we no longer walk merely by faith, but by sight, then we shall see that, in spite of appearances to the contrary here on earth, He is really our Lord, Savior, and King and that His Gospel is everlastingly true. May He grant us His Holy Spirit to the end that we shall never be offended in Him!

W. Arndt.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

John 1, 19—28.

While we are standing almost in the shadow of the Christmas-tree, there steps before us in our text the great teacher who terminates the long list of Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist. Let no one say that the section before us does not constitute a fitting text for the Sunday before Christmas. John the Baptist here points to the very Person whose birth we shall celebrate in the immediate future. And he tells us who this Person is, namely, the Christ, and that he himself is not worthy to render this Person the most humble service, not even to unloose the latchet of His shoes. He indicates thereby that the Jesus whose birth we shall soon sing about is the great God and our Redeemer. Whoever will take this message to heart will be preparing for Christmas in the right way and will perceive, too, that this text has an important message for him at this particular season. Is there one among us who feels keenly that much of the Christmas joy which we see about us is a hollow show, one of the many vanities that the children of men like to engage in, a pageant that lasts for a day and consists largely in an orgy of spending and dissipation, frequently leaving distress and heartache in its wake? Let him see that, while it is true that many people observe Christmas in a wrong way and from motives that are not commendable, it is also true that the foundation for the Christmas joy of God's children stands firm and will stand firm throughout eternity. It is simply this, that the Child born in Bethlehem more than 1900 years ago, the Child that we are speaking of these days, is the Christ, the Son of God. If we ponder this fact, Christmas will not appear ridiculous to us, an empty bubble, created by the folly and vanity of men, but will be to us a festival of holy joy, spreading that peace in our heart which passes all understanding.

Aside from the feature of the text just dwelt on, there is an aspect of it that lends itself well to a meditation before Christmas. St. John the Baptist here confesses Christ and by his example teaches how we are to render testimony of Him whose birth we are about to celebrate. We know that the Scriptures repeatedly stress our duty of confessing Jesus before men. Cf. Matt. 10, 32 f. and 1 Pet. 3, 15. Confessing Christ — how glad should we not be to do this if we actually are filled with joy over the birth of the Savior! Let us, then, learn how we should testify of Christ to our fellow-men by studying the example of John the Baptist. Our theme is: —

The Testimony of John Concerning Christ.

We see —

1. *That he testified of Christ without being influenced by flattery, fear, or the desire of favor.*

2. That he testified at the proper place and time.
3. That he testified in the proper manner.
4. That in his testimony he emphasized what was essential.

1.

While John was baptizing on the east side of the river Jordan, he one day saw a distinguished company of people coming toward him. It consisted of people who were giving their time and attention to the Temple service in Jerusalem, priests and Levites. They asked him, "Who art thou?" No one can deny that it was a flattering fact for John that a delegation of dignitaries came down from Jerusalem to see him. How important a person the rulers in Jerusalem must have considered him, since they thought it worth while to send to him not merely one messenger, but a delegation! "And they that were sent were of the Pharisees," says our text. We see that they not only held a high official position, but in addition belonged to that influential and respected group that was thought to be holier than any other group among the Jews.

There was a great temptation for John in that question, "Who art thou?" He must have known that the people were speculating as to whether he was the Messiah, the Christ, or not, and now it appeared that not only the common people, but the chief men of Jerusalem likewise were seriously considering the possibility of his being the Messiah. The question was, as it were, an invitation addressed to him to declare himself the King of the Jews, the promised Helper. And it was implied that, if he should make such a declaration, he would be received with loud acclaim.

What does John answer? The evangelist has some peculiar words on this point. We read: "He confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ." Note the emphasis on the fact that John confessed and that he did not deny. The evangelist means to say that it was something remarkable that occurred. Some other person in a similar situation would not have confessed, but would have denied. With John, however, it was different — he confessed, he spoke the truth. From his answer we see that the question, "Who art thou?" really amounted to this question, Art thou the Christ? Accordingly he says, I am not the One whom many of you think me to be. I am not the Christ.

The delegation continued its questioning. "What then? Art thou Elias? He said, I am not." John was Elias in a way, according to the testimony of the Bible itself. Cf. Matt. 11, 14; 17, 12 f. He had come in the power and spirit of Elijah and was the forerunner of the Messiah. But in another way he was not Elijah, namely, not the old Elijah who had lived on earth in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. The question put to John really had the meaning, Art thou the old Elias who was taken up into heaven? And John very properly an-

swered, No. Then they inquired, "Art thou that Prophet?" that is, the great Prophet of whom Moses had said that the Lord would raise Him up to be the Leader of Israel? John very properly says, No; for that Prophet was the Messiah, and he was not the Messiah.

We see here that John delivers his testimony without fear. He knew very well that a plain answer of his would involve the loss of the admiration of the people which he was now enjoying and their adherence to him. But he was not influenced by a desire for earthly gain or fame. The invitation that he proclaim himself the great King was not accepted by him. The prospect of a crown did not induce him to alter a single letter of his testimony.

Let John be an example to us in this respect. It is easy enough to confess Jesus when everybody else about us is doing the same thing. Joining in the hymns of the Church and in the confession of the Creed when it is recited by the congregation is not difficult. It is a good and God-pleasing thing to do, but it is not anything heroic, nor does it require great courage. But when you are in the midst of enemies of Jesus and there arises an opportunity to confess Him, then the situation is altogether different. To declare your faith in Him under such circumstances is very trying. Many a time we falter.

At times the temptation arises that we modify our testimony of Jesus on account of some favor or advantage we might gain by such a move. We may be speaking to men that are influential and prominent, men who can assist us in reaching some coveted goal, and we say to ourselves that we must not utter anything that might offend them, and so we suppress what our conscience urges us to tell. In all such situations let us think of John and courageously, without fear and the attempt to gain advantages for ourselves, confess Jesus.

Perhaps some one says, I do not know what to say when there is an opportunity to confess. Friend, John does not say much. His replies are brief. Learn to say that short word *no*. When others ridicule Jesus and ask you to join them, say *no,* emphatically. That is a grand confession. Or simply recite the words of the Apostles' Creed, stating, "These are my convictions." Even such brief, sincere testimony is very effective.

2.

Again, John rendered his testimony at the proper time and place. He did not go to Jerusalem, or Antioch, or Alexandria, or Rome. No, he spoke in the region about Jordan, where God had placed him and where, according to God's will, he was to do his work. Listen to what he says: "I am the voice of one crying in the *wilderness.*"

There is a very important lesson implied here for us. The question arises, When and where must I testify concerning Jesus? Must I become a minister or teacher or missionary? Must I forsake my

calling in order to attend to this work of confessing Jesus? This question is answered here. The proper place for us to give witness of Jesus is in that calling in which God placed us. The proper time for the rendering of such testimony is the time when, in our calling, as we go about the performance of our regular duties, an opportunity arises to tell people of the faith that is in us. The Christians are light-bearers. Let them be light-bearers in the station where God has put them.

Let us, then, not understand the admonition to confess Jesus to mean that every one must enter the ministry. If God wants you in the ministry, He will indicate it to you in a way which you can understand. He will call you. You can and should be a witness to Christ without being a minister. Think of the maid of Naaman's wife. 2 Kings 5, 2.

3.

We furthermore learn in what manner our testimony must be rendered. John speaks respectfully to the delegation that has come for an interview. There is nothing swaggering or boastful in his replies. He is humble and courteous. He is but the voice of one crying in the wilderness; he is merely baptizing with water, that is, he himself has no power to bestow spiritual blessings in baptism.

All this is important. Many a truthful testimony concerning Jesus loses its effectiveness and to all appearance does more harm than good because it is rendered in a proud, arrogant way, which repels the party who is being dealt with. Not one of us feels inclined to listen to a man who comes before us in a vain, conceited manner, whether what he says is true or not.

At the same time, John's manner showed that he was interested in the welfare of the people who had come to him. He told them the very things they needed to know. Let the one listening to you arrive at the conviction that you are really concerned about his eternal well-being, and your testimony, even if haltingly rendered, will be quite likely to make a deep impression.

4.

Finally, we learn here that our testimony has to stress those things about Jesus that are essential. John does not tell his questioners some interesting facts about the appearance and dress of Jesus and some other external matters, but he does make it clear that the Person he is speaking of is truly the Messiah, the Redeemer, and the great God. These are the essentials. What man must know is, How can I get rid of the burden of my sins? How can I obtain the pardon of the great God whom I have offended?

Let this be a hint to us. The discussion of some geographical matters mentioned in the Bible may be interesting enough and of

some use, but it is not essential. Our main aim must not be to entertain people by our testimony, but to save their souls by putting them in contact with the Redeemer.

Do you say, We have no strength or ability in ourselves to testify concerning Jesus as we should? That is very true, but God is willing to strengthen you through His Spirit, so that in this respect, too, we may show ourselves to be true disciples of Jesus. He is doing it in the means of grace, the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Prayerfully use these means, and you will be filled with willingness and strength to testify of the great love of the Savior which manifested itself so strikingly in His lowly birth in Bethlehem.

W. Arndt.

Sunday after Christmas.

Luke 2, 27—32.

A touching incident in the life of Jacob, the patriarch, when, after a separation of twenty years, he again met his beloved Joseph. Joseph had been the center of his father's tenderest affections. When the tidings reached him of his alleged cruel death, he displayed every token of a sorrowing and prostrated parent. When, after twenty years of bereavement, he is informed that his son is yet alive, exalted to the most eminent post of power and dignity, the good old man is so overwhelmed with joy that he regards not the length and danger of the way nor the weakness of his frame; in spite of his 130 years he hastens to the embrace of his dearly beloved Joseph. Words cannot picture the delight of that reunion. Although his faltering tongue pronounces the words of exquisite tenderness: "Now let me die since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

So Simeon. He had received from God the assurance of having his life prolonged till his eyes should see the promised Messiah. On the realization of this promise rested the fondest expectation of his life and faith. When the divine Infant was at last brought to the Temple, there to be presented before the Lord, we hear the venerable old priest, his faith turned to sight and his hope into realization, breaking forth into the devout exclamation, similar, though superior, to Jacob's: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Two particulars stand out prominently: —

1. Simeon's Character.

Simeon's character is given under three views. It says he was 1) devout, 2) just, and 3) waiting for the consolation of Israel. "Devout." This we can already gather from the place where we find him, the Temple. Regular, dutiful, and faithful in all that related to the worship of God, not merely from habit, but because it was his

heart's prompting and delight. It is the man and woman who is constant upon God's house, whose spirit falls in with that of David, when he said: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. . . . I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." That has the proper traits of saintship, and a most dubious type of religion is that which is otherwise.

"Just," that is, of a blameless life, honest and upright in his dealings with his fellow-men. Where there is genuine faith and piety, proper relation to God, there should also be practical righteousness, proper relation to man. "Pure religion and undefiled," says the apostle, "is this, to keep oneself unspotted from the world," its principles and detrimental practises, its hypocrisies and sensualities, its fashions and ways.

"Waiting for the Consolation of Israel." A familiar expression employed among the Jews. Such Christ, the Messiah, was indeed; the subject of Israel's most comforting prophecies and sacred songs. Thus Abraham rejoiced to see His day, as Jacob exclaims on his death-bed: "O Lord, I have waited for Thy salvation." David plaintively tunes his harp: "Oh, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Isaiah cries out: "Comfort ye My people, saith your God." Simeon, here, one of the true-hearted believers of that day, amid the troubles of his country, the gross wickedness of its rulers, the pharisaism of its priests, the deadness into which the Jewish religion and worship had fallen, soothes his declining years with the promised "Consolation of Israel." No wonder that, when his dimming eyes and his trembling hands touched the holy Child, he pressed Him to his heart and broke out in this joyous, exulting, and exalting praise.

2. Simeon's Testimony Concerning Christ.

Nunc Dimittis are the first two words with which Simeon's song begins the Latin version, and so the whole song is called. A more beautiful and a stronger testimony that the Babe which Simeon was holding in his arms was the Christ could not have been given in human speech. A whole set of grand things mentioned: the Salvation of God; the Light to lighten the Gentiles; the glory of God's people Israel. Transcendent, yet true, every one of them. Still further he describes that Babe as the point on which the fortunes of men should turn. His word to the virgin mother was: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Fearful prophecy! But so it came to pass. Some, by means of Him, fell, as it were, as over a stone lying in their path, into perdition. The chief priests and scribes, the amiable young ruler whom the Lord loved, but who loved his riches more;

Judas and the many others who were offended and walked no more with Jesus — these were tried as to their secret thoughts and characters and were found wanting. On the other hand, Simeon, John the Baptist, the eleven apostles, and hundreds of the poor and humble found Him to be the divine Person and Savior whom they needed, and theirs was the kingdom of heaven. So it is in our day, too. As men reject or accept that mysterious Son of Mary, they will be lost or saved. Simeon also points out that no feelings of man will be so intense as the feelings for or against Christ; either they will hate Him, and then they will hate Him with a perfect hatred; or they will love Him, and then they will love Him with an exceeding great love. Examples are plentiful. Julian the Apostate, falling in battle after he spent a lifetime in railing the Carpenter's Son, as he sneeringly called Him, and seeking to uproot Christ and His people, raised his bloody fist on high and, gnashing his teeth, cried out, "And yet Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" Stephen, dying under the shower of stones, prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Nor is it different now. Nothing now on earth is hated with a more intense and hearty hatred than pure Christianity. Then there are those to whom the name of Christ is music, who respect every slip of paper which contains its letters, and who are most happy when they are counted worthy to do anything for Him and for those who love Him.

We are verging rapidly to the close of the year. In fitting harmony, while keeping her eyes on the Infant Savior, the Church presents two aged saints whose earthly years were nearing their end and permits one of them to tell us his thoughts over the opening grave. The departure of another year of life's span reminds one of our own departure. What is your hope, your prospect? "Lord," said the venerable saint, "now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." Why? Because "mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." To see Jesus is the highest blessedness in life and the greatest peace and happiness in death. A learned scientist, asked what he considered the greatest discovery he ever made, replied, "That I have found a Savior."

Embrace and cherish this divine Child and Savior and then let the sunset of life come at fourscore years or at one score, you will be ready to sing your *Nunc Dimittis.* L. BUCHHEIMER.

Sunday after New Year.

Matt. 2, 13—23.

There is a peculiar significance attached to the fact that so soon after the wonders attending His birth the Child of Bethlehem should be made to feel the bitter sting of human depravity and malice. We believe that Jesus is the King of kings, God made manifest in the

flesh. This message is written across the pages of Holy Scripture. He is called "the Mighty God," Is. 9, 6; "the Prince of princes," Dan. 8, 25; 9, 25; "the King of Glory," Ps. 24, 10; "the King of Zion," Zech. 9, 9; "Lord of lords and King of kings," Rev. 17, 14; crowned with many crowns, Rev. 19, 12.

David once fled before Absalom in time of conspiracy and rebellion, crossing the brook Kidron with bare feet, covered head, and tearful eyes; his kingdom was in the balance. 2 Sam. 15. When Charlemagne was a corpse, his friends still clung to him, setting up his lifeless body in the tomb, placing a crown upon his pulseless temples and a scepter in his stiff, cold hands. But the "new-born King" of the Magi, "Christ the Lord," as the angel told the shepherds, sitteth "King forever," Ps. 29, 10. "And were the world ten times as wide, With gold and jewels beautified, It would be far too small to be A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee." (Luther.)

The King of Heaven in Exile.

1. The cause of His hasty flight.

The command of God. V. 13. The timely warning: "Arise," "flee into Egypt," "be thou there," came after the forty days of cleansing and purification. Lev. 12; Luke 2. Wise men had come and gone, leaving treasures and sweetest memories. Sudden awakening; frightened mother; flight by night; hardships of journey. Why? Was not this Child equal to God? King of heaven? Lord of all? Why this instant and implicit obedience? V. 14. Now under the Law, Gal. 4, 4; in state of humiliation, Phil. 2, 5—8; His glory hidden, rank laid aside; subject to Father's command. It was disregard of God's timely warning that caused the loss of Paradise; fate of Lot's wife; death upon all, Rom. 5, 12. Jesus, King of heaven, obedient from infancy.

The wickedness of men. V. 13. "Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." Unknown depths of sin. This man-beast had plotted against the life of the new-born King from the beginning. V. 8. Foiled, he planned greater wickedness. V. 16. Hands reeking with blood of wife, sons, friends. Murder of innocents not shocking to his depraved mind. Lives cheap. Blood carnivals in Rome. Gangsters and racketeers of to-day. Oregon student found riddled with bullets after high-school game. Herod old, but insanely jealous. Mortal foe of any possible rival. Planned to have *élite* of Jerusalem slain in his last hour that some one might weep at his death. Should the King of heaven go into exile for such a one as this? the Creator fear the impotent rage of His creature? Legions of angels at His service. Almighty Son of almighty Father. Deigned to be saved by Joseph. Altogether our Brother. Not yet come to judge. Tempted like as we are. Discretion better part of valor.

The prophecy of Scripture. V. 15. Outstanding causes of flight into Egypt and of exile there, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son." V. 15. Hos. 11, 1. Israel taken to Egypt by another Joseph and redeemed by God through Moses. So Messiah to be in exile there for a time only. "In Rama was there a voice heard." Vv. 17. 18. Jer. 31, 15. Rachel represented as mother of Bethlehem, having given her life there for the life of Benjamin. Gen. 35, 19. "He shall be called a Nazarene." V. 23. Man of Nazareth a root or tender shoot. Note "prophets," plural; a composite prophecy. Is. 11, 1; 53, 2; Jer. 23, 5. 6; 33, 15; Zech. 3, 8, and others. Shepherds, Anna, Simeon, lost Christ so soon; dependent with others on Scripture. Light that shineth in dark place. Casts halo upon humiliating exile of the King in Egypt.

The work of redemption. King of heaven came to save His people from their sins. Peter the Great nine months in foreign lands as common laborer, sailor, shipbuilder, to bring first-hand knowledge, educators, nurses, doctors, engineers, home with him for the benefit of his backward people. Jesus became man to redeem men; exile, to redeem exiles. Cause of separation, sin. Adam hid. Jonah fled. Sinners seek cover of night. Enemies of God. No room for Jesus in inn. World, made by Him, knew Him not; own received Him not, John 1, 10. 11. Exiled from own kingdom, home, country, Temple, Church, to regain Paradise for lost; to make disobedient righteous, Rom. 5, 19; to reconcile world to God, 2 Cor. 5, 19; that sinners might flee to Him, not from Him, Ps. 143, 9.

2. The significance of His exile to us.

However dark the night, Jesus has led the way. He is the Man ahead in the tangled maze of our existence. Never asks us to tread a path which has not been trodden by His own feet. Left throne of heaven to be exile on earth. Fled from Holy Land to idolatrous Egypt. Yet returned safely. Vv. 19—21. Herod dead. "They" (v. 20), Antipater, heir apparent, slain five days before the agonizing death of Herod, same year, 750 A. U. C. Abraham went to a far country, trusting the word of the Lord. Ruth: "Thy people, my people; Thy God, my God." God's Word always right. Heed His commands. Trust His leadership. Not sit in seat of scornful. Ps. 1, 1. "Peculiar people." 1 Pet. 2, 9. If they persecute you in one city, flee into another. Matt. 10, 23. General Grant: "I have tried always to realize that, quite apart from any plan or thought of my own, I am but an instrument in God's hands to accomplish God's purposes." The most powerful figures of history are men who gave up thrones, rather than men who grasped them. To accomplish God's purposes, Jesus discarded the royal robes of heaven to make us kings and priests unto God. Let us learn of Him.

No matter how pleasant appearances may be, we dare not trust the world. Herod popular king; public improvements; rebuilt Temple. Would he kill Lord of Temple? Pretended friendship, lying worship. V. 8. Worldly-minded and unbelieving men may offer you praise, honor, advancement; but beware lest you cast your anchor of hope within the hold of the ship. Friendship of world, enmity against God. Opposed to cross. Hate you. Phantom promises. Third temptation. Were bribing priests friends of Judas? The supreme tragedy: Gain world — lose soul. Trust in God; put not your confidence in money and men.

Whatever may befall us in life, God's promises stand sure. He is able to turn evil into good. Man proposes, God disposes. Children of Bethlehem saved under Old Covenant; members of Church by consecration and circumcision. Little souls carried swiftly, as on angels' wings, to their eternal home. Better so than that some of them should later stand mocking beneath the cross. Better martyrs for exiled King than to join in the chorus: "Away with Him, crucify Him!" Joseph's slavery saved many lives. Early Christians scattered to spread the Gospel. Paul's chains bracelets of gold. Blood of martyrs seed of the Church. Luther fled Rome; result, world-wide reformation. Seclusion at Wartburg — finest of Bible translations. Walther hard pressed in Europe — new Lutheran Zion in America. Truly, all things work together for good to them that love God. Rom. 8, 28.

No matter how far we have strayed, the King of heaven has redeemed us. Fugitive for us. Weary way, without modern means of locomotion. Rocky canyons, burning desert sands. Only protection, faith and prayer. Are you offended at His lowliness? Is He a stranger to you? Have you neglected His Word? Do you think you are too far gone? Only believe. The King of heaven went this weary way for you. He retraced His steps for you. Whatever has been your past, He has fulfilled the Law for you. Yes, He walked that far more difficult blood-stained way from Gethsemane to Calvary, wearing the crown of thorns and bearing the cross of guilt for you, — all this, that you might have the assurance of forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life. Story of dove pursued by hawk; flew low, hawk swooped as low; soared aloft, hawk as high; sought woods, hawk at home there; found cleft in rock, saved from mortal foe. No salvation in poverty or riches, humility or pride, nature or companionship, but solely in the Rock of Ages cleft for you and me. "Other refuge have I none," etc. (Hymn 107, 2.)

WALTER F. TROEGER.

First Sunday after Epiphany.

Luke 2, 41—52.

It is part of the wisdom of God to omit certain facts which are not necessary for us to know regarding the youth of Jesus. However, Christianity had not been very old when many fables and legends were written concerning the youth of Christ. There was a time, in the Middle Ages, when these legends were frequently read in place of Scripture-lessons at public worship. There are a few to-day who still believe these legends concerning the youth of Christ.

In this brief text we have presented to us all the facts which are necessary to know, and from them let us observe the lesson which God intended us to learn.

Christ's Ideal Youth.

1.

In this present century the teen age is considered the most critical time of life. Most difficulties may be overcome if children in that age become accustomed to regular attendance at divine services. The lesson to-day presents Jesus in the Temple. Here describe in detail the custom among the ancient Israelites of attending the feast of the Passover.

Here we also learn the lesson of the duty of parents pertaining to the proper instruction of the youth. How foolish for people to say that they will allow their children to choose their religion when they become full-grown men and women. Do we wait to allow children to choose their own food, clothing, etc.? Therefore, God gives children parents that these may train the little ones.

The object of this instruction is to learn to know the way to heaven by the study of the Bible. Obligations placed upon parents have this aim. In order to fulfil this duty, churches have established their week-day Bible schools and Sunday-schools. Here emphasize the need of congregational schools in which parents can perform the duty in training children. In many cases it may be difficult to maintain such schools, especially where congregations are scattered over a large area, where there are very small instructing parishes, and where the idea of a parish school is, or has been, an unknown institution.

Luther in the Small Catechism wrote as the heading "As the Head of the Family should Teach the Household." The first duty therefore is for parents to see to it that their children receive religious instruction. This little book may be used in the homes. Parents should never feel that their responsibilities have been fulfilled by simply supporting a school or sending their children to Sunday-school.

2.

"It came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

Here is a lesson of practical Christianity. Here the Son even excelled his parents in the desire of continued worship. Learn the lesson that even children can become well versed in Scripture. Call attention to the deity of Christ as manifested through his great knowledge.

Despite His deity observe His humility. He is found with the teachers. Seeks more knowledge.

Jesus had no opportunities in His earlier youth of receiving a training in a higher school of education. Therefore it is doubly interesting to behold the marvelous wisdom of Christ.

Conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was the Messiah. We are expressly told in Luke 2, 52. "He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man." He was the Word made flesh. According to His human nature He learned as our children learn, "yet without sin."

Thus we have the two natures of Christ, human and divine, combined and manifested.

3.

When the parents of our Lord had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother knew it not. "But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem."

After three days they found Jesus among the doctors in the Temple. The parents were amazed. The fact that the parents did not notice the absence of Jesus until twenty-four hours afterwards is a sign of parental negligence. Mary was not sinless. Jesus was. There was a reprimand contained in the words of the mother, "Son, why hast Thou dealt with us thus?" This was sinful in Mary, as is indicated by the answer which Jesus gave, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to save the world. That was the Father's business. Mary indeed, at this time, did not fully comprehend the purpose and the object of Christ's coming.

At this time the Lord's interest in God's kingdom was an occasion of regret to Joseph and Mary, as it was afterward the motive for His suffering. The victory, however, was great, for it brought to the world salvation.

4.

The last lesson inculcated is obedience to parents. "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them." V. 51. Here emphasize obedience to the Fourth Commandment. Parents are placed as stewards over their children. They are not to abuse them and misuse them, but they are to consider them a trust from God.

Sometimes the parents are not interested in their children's spiritual welfare. In that case children may disobey the parents. Children to be obedient only when it seems reasonable! Much is heard in these days about flaming youth. Deut. 27, 16; Prov. 30, 17; Eph. 6, 1—3. Children should therefore learn from this lesson, should be subject to their parents. Take these lessons seriously and ponder them. Following this lesson and the example contained therein will bring prosperity and blessing here on earth and eternal salvation in the life hereafter. F. Oberschulte.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

John 2, 1—11.

Christianity is not a sad, morose, and melancholy religion. Happiness is a Christian's divine heritage. The Bible, from cover to cover, impresses this fact that Christians may be truly happy.

This Gospel-lesson presents to us a lesson of joy. Jesus was invited to a wedding at Cana. He did not decline the invitation on this joyful occasion. The evangelist does not mention the name of the persons entering matrimony; undoubtedly they were relatives of Mary and Joseph. It is interesting to note that the idea of joy is impressed upon us by the very first miracle which Christ performed.

All the miracles of Christ have important lessons to teach. There are few, however, which may be viewed from so many angles as this one to-day. All of the miracles of Christ manifest curious aspects of His divine glory. Each one may be looked at from various angles, and each one presents some fresh thought of the glory and the truth that was in Jesus Christ. Consider: —

The Miracle in Cana.

1. It is a manifestation of His creative power;
2. A revelation how Christ hallows family life;
3. A symbol of Christ's glory;
4. A lesson how Jesus supplies the deficiency of earthly resources.

1.

Magicians in all ages have performed remarkable feats. Magicians in the days of Pharaoh in Egypt. Mostly a manifestation of satanic power.

Christ here manifests divine power and glory. "Draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast." V. 8. And immediately the water is changed into wine. Observe that no means are employed. Sometimes Jesus did use outward means, such as clay or the moistening of the ear with spittle. Sometimes He sent those who had been blessed by Him to a pool. Sometimes He laid His hand upon the sick, but here is an instance where Jesus uses no outward means and performs an astonishing miracle. It shows that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus . . . and manifested His glory."

2.

Some people may think that this miracle was unworthy of Jesus, being performed upon such a trivial occasion. Not so; this was a most important event, as all marriages are. Jesus thereby hallowed the marriage tie. "Marriage is honorable in all," says the apostle.

The fact that Jesus was present at this marriage in Cana manifests His approval of Christians' entering into the holy estate of wedlock. Some may say that marriage is not so honorable and imagine that their continued practise of celibacy is a holier state.

These are indeed signs of the time, for the apostles predicted these very conditions in this latter day. "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, . . . forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving." Rome is one of the institutions to-day which insists upon this false doctrine. Gen. 2, 18. 24.

Marriage is God's institution to secure ends that are pleasing in the sight of the Lord. It is not to be shunned, but rather is to be sought in the fear of God. Col. 3, 17: "Whatsoever ye do, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus." As Jesus went to the home of Cana, so He will come into the Christians' home to-day. There is no need for people to withdraw from the responsibilities of marriage in order to develop the whitest saintliness and Christlike purity. The Christian may live a more God-pleasing life in this holy estate than out of it.

3.

We have here a lesson of Christ's glory as a Sanctifier of all earthly joys.

Wine in the Old Testament is a symbol of gladness, and in the New Testament it receives a yet deeper meaning; for in the Lord's Supper Christ uses it, so that in, with, and under it we receive His own blood.

Through the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Christ enables the Christian to find true joy in the assurance of forgiveness of sins. There is no greater joy in this world than Christian joy. Here go into detail regarding the joys which Christians may experience in time of tribulation by having true faith in Christ.

But even our commonest blessing may be a source of true joy. Christians should have no association, no amusements, in which the Spirit of Christ could not enter in. The joys of the earth are enhanced by inviting Jesus into the midst of people who are enjoying themselves. Christians ought not to meddle with pleasures over which the sign of the cross could not be placed.

The fact that Jesus used wine at this wedding does not signify Jesus' sanction of the excessive use of it. Neither does the abuse of God's blessing increase human joy, but rather sorrow. The Lord has given distinct commands regarding the misuse of His blessings. Rom. 13, 13.

4.

The last lesson: Jesus shows forth His glory by supplying all our needs.

"His mother saith unto Him, They have no wine." The pleasures of the world soon run out, but Christ supplies all earthly needs of His people. Servants are charged to fill the water-pots. Through Jesus' power a marvelous change is effected. Another lesson that we learn is that Jesus will feed and satisfy the spiritual thirst and hunger for every man who longs for Him. Note the words of the governor, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." The world usually gives the best first, but Jesus at all times assures us that we shall receive the greatest blessing last. Thus, despite our earthly deficiency, our sorrows and tribulations, we have the assurance and hope that Christ will fill our cup to overflowing with joy and pleasure. Jesus' gifts become sweeter day after day. Advancing years make them more precious than necessary.

Conclusion. — And His disciples believed on Him. Those that were present at the marriage feast were strengthened in their faith and made firmer in their trust in Jesus.

The apostle says, "These things were written for our learning." Let the Savior ever be with you in your home, let Him enter into your joys. Yea, let Him live in your life, that at the end of it you may say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

F. Oberschulte.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Matt. 8, 1—13.

The Sermon on the Mount is immediately followed by a group of marvelous miracles performed by Christ. Some one has said that miracles are "the bell rung before the sermon." In the context the apostle masses nine miracles together, and these again are divided into three groups.

The first group comprises the miracles of healing physical ills. In this to-day's text is included. It contains two narratives manifesting the divine glory of Jesus. Searching for the central point of these miracles, we find that it was the faith of the individual.

Faith the Only Way to Heaven.

1. The absolute need of faith. 2. Its distinguishing characteristics. 3. The guaranteed blessing.

1.

"When He came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Matt. 8, 1. 2. This man had faith. That is necessary if a blessing is to be received. Heb. 11, 6; Mark 16, 16 b; Heb. 4, 2.

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." This man was by birth a heathen. There is sufficient evidence, however, that this man, by hearing of the Messiah and learning to know Jesus, had come to faith in Jesus Christ. He was a Gentile, but from the Jews he had learned the truth. John 4, 22. As a centurion his work was to live by the sword. He was in the service of the Roman government. But since he had the true faith, he was pleasing to God and acceptable to the Lord Jesus and received all the blessings which faith bestows.

On the other hand, Jesus declares in our text: "But the children of the kingdom," etc. "The children of the kingdom," — what advantages they had over this centurion! And yet they are cast out. Why? Because they lack faith. Heb. 11, 6; 4, 2. Lot's wife. 1 Cor. 10, 1—11; John 8, 24. Judas, who had been so highly honored, was lost. The malefactor upon the cross, who had come from the lowest depths of iniquity, was saved. Why? The malefactor had faith, kindled in his heart by the Holy Spirit; Judas had lost his faith.

Have you the true, saving faith? Without it absolutely nothing will avail you; there is no substitute for it. With it, you cannot fail. John 5, 4; Mark 16, 16.

2.

And what were the particular characteristics of this man's faith? He did not place his trust merely in the miracle-working power of Jesus, but in Christ's person. He shows this by prostrating himself before Christ and saying: "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." V. 8. His faith trusted the "word only" of Jesus. That is a characteristic of true faith.

Here is a lesson for us. This same Christ who stood there before this man of Capernaum has now ascended into heaven. Do we place a like trust and confidence in Him? We have the Word of Christ, Holy Scripture. Do we, do you trust the "word only"? In this Word we have Christ and all that Christ did for us. John 3, 16; 1 John 1, 7.

And just as this faith is created by the Word of God, 1 Pet. 1, 21, so it feeds upon this same Word. A faith which can live without the Word is no true faith. The true marks of a true, living faith are manifested by diligent attendance at divine services and frequent partaking of the blessed Sacrament. How often do we find that people who claim to be Christians neglect these means of grace! The only occasions at which they hear God's Word are perhaps at a burial, at a wedding, and occasionally at a baptism. That is not sufficient. Diligent attendance at divine services should mark the believer. Then the other fruits of faith will follow. John 15, 5. 6; Gal. 5, 22. 23. How is it with your faith?

3.

What were the blessings which this heathen convert obtained through faith? When Christ observed the faith of this centurion, He said: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." V. 10.

The first blessing is acceptance; that means and includes forgiveness of sins. Gal. 2, 16. True faith obtains all that it desires. Thus it was also in the case of the leper mentioned in the first part of our text. He had said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." V. 2. "Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean." Thus the promise of Christ is true: "Whatsoever ye ask, believing, ye shall receive." Thus it was with the centurion. Jesus answered his request by saying: "I will come and heal him" [his servant]. The centurion only entreated Him to speak the word. Jesus said: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Thus the blessings of faith are that nothing shall be denied to the believer, to him who trusts in Christ. Faith receives what it asks for.

The truly believing Christian has comfort in time of tribulation and trouble. At such a time he can exclaim, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble." Ps. 46, 1.

"And I say unto you that many shall come from the East and West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob," etc. V. 12. Heaven and all its glory is given to the believer. Ps. 16, 11; 17, 15; 1 Cor. 13, 11. 12. (Hymn 375, 1.) F. OBERSCHULTE.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Matt. 8, 23—27.

(Parallel passages: Mark 4, 37 ff.; Luke 8, 23 ff.)

(Choose your introduction.)

1.

If you were asked to suggest a proper heading for this brief, but striking story, a number of expressive titles might occur to you. But none perhaps would be more appropriate than the exclamation quoted here as having been uttered by the disciples — we shall make it the theme for this sermon —: "What manner of man is this?"

2.

In His dealings with His people the Lord sometimes has ways which to the human mind seem wholly contradictory.

His Gospel-message assures us that for the sake of His Son, our Redeemer, He has become a Father to us, and we are to be His children. But even while His heart-warming words are still ringing in our ears, everything around us apparently begins to go wrong; the devil stirs up trouble against us, our lives are clouded with trials and temptations, and the Father seems soon to have forgotten all about His children.

In the stress of puzzling sorrows we are tempted to cry as David did (Ps. 10, 1): "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?" etc.

And then again, just when it seems that we cannot go on this way any longer and when there is apparently no answer to our praying, there comes so comforting a relief, so convincing a manifestation of the Lord's sympathetic presence and merciful help that we can only humbly and silently marvel at His love and faithfulness, while we at the same time sincerely regret our weakness of faith and our all too ready doubting.

The story in the Gospel before us is an instance in point. The disciples in their extremity at one moment felt utterly forsaken by their Lord. In the next moment Jesus stood before them so impressively revealed as their great Deliverer that they were moved to exclaim in the words which shall serve as the theme for this sermon: —

"What Manner of Man Is This?"

1. His beloved friends are in trouble, and seemingly He sleeps.
2. His despairing friends appeal to Him, and gloriously He saves.

1.

The setting of the jewel of this story.

It was in the early part of Jesus' ministry. The Lord had just spent a very busy day in Capernaum, preaching and healing the sick. In order to secure a few hours of much-needed rest, He gathered His disciples about Him and set out for the shores of the Sea of Galilee, intending to cross to the other side. Our text now takes up the story. Vv. 23—25.

A. The beloved friends of Jesus are in great trouble.

1. Who are the friends of Jesus? — The men who had heard His preaching; who had been moved to accept Him as the promised Messiah, their Savior; who had heeded His urgent call, "Follow me." Not long as yet had they known Him, but long enough to feel that in leaving all to be with Him and live their life for Him, they had done the right thing. And they had already found Him to be a Man worth knowing, a Prophet worth believing, a Savior worth accepting, a Leader worth following, a Friend worth trusting.

His friends, — are you His friend? Just what do you know about Him? What do you think of Him? What is He to you? If you can say, as Luther so well said, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father," etc., — if this is your conviction, your faith, your life, you are His friend, and you may be sure He is your Friend.

But if you have not yet found your way to Him, remember you need His friendship, He offers you His friendship; it is His friendship that will save you. Will you accept it? Blessed privilege to be counted among the friends of Jesus! John 15, 13—16. Who would not embark on any voyage with Jesus in the ship? — And yet,

2. The friends of Jesus are in trouble. — A storm. It must have been a tempest of unusual violence; for even the fishermen among the disciples, who were accustomed to the frequent squalls occurring on this body of water, appear to have become terrified at the present experience. — What was the cause of this violent disturbance? Did the devil, perhaps, mean to rob the disciples of the joy of their newly found faith? Were these friends of Jesus already being made to suffer for their Savior's sake? Nothing is said to this effect; but neither is there any reason why this should not be the explanation of the present experience; it would be wholly in line with what we know about the devil's character, purpose, and power.

And why should the Lord Himself permit a situation so desperate to arise? Was it not perhaps to test the faith of His friends and to create an opportunity for the revelation of His power and goodness? John 11, 4; 9, 3.

Troubles, trials, persecutions, — these fall to the lot of every Christian on his voyage across the sea of life. History shows that

this has always been the case. The Bible teaches that it will never be otherwise. Ps. 34, 19; Acts 14, 22; 2 Tim. 3, 12.

Some of these experiences come upon us in the ordinary course of events simply because we live in a world corrupted by sin; others are brought on by certain misdeeds of ours or are caused directly by the devil himself. All of them are heightened and multiplied by "the old Evil Foe," who fiercely hates the children of God (Job 1, 6—22; 1 Pet. 5, 8. 9), or are aggravated by the evil designs of the children of this world (John 15, 18—21). There are troubles that distress soul and spirit and such as afflict body and life; trials that overtake the individual and such as affect the whole Church; passing squalls and raging, destructive hurricanes. No Christian is spared them; every age of the Church has its share of them. And all of this in spite of — or even because of — the fact that Christians have the Lord, the great Helper in all need, with them in the ship. And what is particularly perplexing —

B. The Master seemingly sleeps.

1. How could He sleep with the turbulent waves tossing the little craft about! It was impossible that He should be ignorant of the extremity in which His friends felt themselves to be. He well knew what was going on and how the disciples felt about it. He loved them; they had left all to follow Him; they depended on Him; He knew they needed Him. And yet He slept on.

2. The disciples might well have encouraged themselves and each other with the observation that, with their mighty Master with them in the ship, no real harm could come to them; they might have reminded themselves and each other that in His apparent indifference to the situation His intentions could only be good, that He was only putting them to the test, and that presently His help would appear. But, alas! they could not close their eyes and ears to what was to be seen and heard: the angry waves, the howling tempest, and—their Master asleep. The conviction of danger and imminent fatality was so strong within them as well-nigh to wreck their faith.

3. Few Christians but can tell of similar experiences. In times when their need of the Helper is most urgent, in times of poverty, illness, bereavement, or other affliction, He often seems farthest away. They have taken Him at His word, have followed Him, and mean to be faithful to Him. But apparently He is indifferent to the plight they are in. Compare the example of Job. The whole Church at times passes through similar straits. Where was the Lord when the ship of His Church was being tossed about by the storms of the persecutions of the first centuries of Christian history? Compare the times of the Reformation, of the Thirty Years' War.

4. Always these experiences are trying, disconcerting, profoundly disturbing to the faith of the Christians. We ought to be strongest

in faith when faith is most needed. It is impossible that He who gave His life for us sinners should forget His promises and forsake His friends. Why, He is but biding His time in order to give the greater manifestation of His power; He is but testing our faith, hoping that we shall victoriously weather the trial. We are taught all this in the Bible; friends come and remind us of it; in fact, we ourselves know it well enough. But how hard it is to forget what we see and hear with our physical senses! How terrifying to see the walls of our lives falling around us, to feel the ground under our feet tremble and quake! How poorly we stand the test; how disgracefully weak our faith becomes!

And, yes, — what manner of man is this who knows that His friends are in trouble and yet apparently sleeps!

If this were the end of the tale, we should never have begun this discourse; but —

2.

A. The appeal for help. V. 25.

1. The disciples give evidence of the weakness of their faith in their appeal to the Lord, not so much in the appeal itself, as rather in the form and manner of it. It was a cry of fear and despair; there is even a hint of reproach in it.

If their faith had been strong, the disciples would have been sure that their Lord and Friend would not forsake them even in their direst extremity; that His help would not fail them even though apparently He slept; that, in fact, no real danger existed as long as He was with them in the ship; and that in His good time His power would deliver them.

And yet, at the same time, the cry for help was really an act of obedience to the Master's will; and it was also an evidence of still existing faith, etc. Compare John 20, 24—29.

2. For a Christian to grow weak in faith, no matter what the circumstance or cause may be, is indeed deserving of censure, particularly if — as is often the case — such weakness is strongly mixed with irritation at, and criticism of, the Lord's way of doing things.

But nothing could be worse than to abandon hope and trust entirely and to lose confidence in the efficacy of prayer. God's urgent invitations to call on Him, to seek His face, though addressed to all and implying the importance of a vigorous faith, are given particularly for the benefit of the Christian in distress, for those afflicted with "fightings and fears within, without," for the disciples of weak and wavering faith. Ps. 50, 15; 1 Thess. 5, 17.

Let the troubled heart but heed the invitation, trust the promises set forth in the Word, and call earnestly and insistently for help. Ps. 27, 8. Such appeals will not go unanswered.

B. The Lord responds gloriously. V. 26. The disciples are delivered.

1. Jesus might now indeed have refused His help and forsaken His disciples. As a matter of fact He censures them strongly, not for the faith still existing or because they called upon Him, but because of their fear and the weakness of faith which they so plainly showed.

It should always be clear to the Christian that doubt and fear are not only injurious to spiritual life, but that they are particularly offensive to God. Weakness of faith is a sin that deserves divine rebuke, and it should be repented of most earnestly. Often, therefore, the Christian's prayer should be (Mark 9, 24), "Lord, I believe," etc.

But how comforting indeed it is to know that "a bruised reed," etc.! Is. 42, 3.

2. How promptly and effectively the Lord now answers the appeal! The simple, but impressive dignity of this Master of the elements, the quiet, but immensely effective command, the prompt obedience on the part of the raging sea and the howling tempest, — much as though a trainer of wild animals stepped into an arena turbulent with the snarling, roaring, charging, fighting of angry brutes and with a few words of peremptory authority stilled the uproar and sent the excited beasts, quieted and cowed, into their respective corners. Would the disciples ever forget that glorious sight and the relief so promptly and effectively given? Must not the vivid memory of this remarkable experience have furnished them with immeasurable comfort in the later days when the storms of persecution broke over their heads and the little vessel of the young Church was being tossed about by the wild waves of the world's hatred? After all, they had not made a mistake in following this remarkable man, and even their weak faith had been gloriously vindicated. "What manner of Man is this!"

The Lord Jesus is still the great Deliverer of His people. He still hears the prayers of our troubled hearts. He controls the destiny of our lives. With Him "in the midst of her," the seemingly frail vessel of His Church will triumphantly outride every storm and stress. Refer to the experiences of Peter, of Paul; to the divine intervention which ended the early persecutions; to the powerful protection which preserved the Church of the Reformation during Luther's time and after.

Many Christians, too, can tell of wonderful experiences of deliverance out of some sorrow, misfortune, calamity, etc. These are encouraging and comforting not only to those who have had them, but to the rest of us as well. Try calling on the Lord when next you feel the need of support and help; you will not be disappointed.

And do not fail to thank and praise His mercy and might for His blessings and His deliverance, etc.

"What manner of man is this!"

Let those who have always known and believed that Jesus is not only their loving Savior, but also their merciful Helper in time of need continue to place their trust in Him, etc.

And if there are any who are still without, let them come into the ship, accept Jesus Christ as their only and real Redeemer, and find Him to be the ready and strong Deliverer out of every trouble.

With Him in the ship of our lives, we shall come safely through every storm and finally reach the port of eternal peace.

Illustrations.

Noah's ark, ponderous and unwieldy though it must have been, rode the raging waters safely because of the promises of God which Noah and his family implicitly believed.

Ships nearing a dangerous shore in a violent storm throw out an anchor. This has a twofold effect. It keeps the vessel from being driven toward the rocks that line the shore and being dashed to pieces upon them, and it holds the nose (or bow) of the vessel straight into the wind, so that the onrushing waves are cut in two and do not strike the ship sideways and swamp it. The faith of Christians holds safely in the midst of the storms of life, so that they are kept from being swamped by the waves of adversity or dashed to pieces on the rocks of despair.

One of our missionaries in India writes: "It was night when we (I on my motor-cycle and a native catechist in the side-car) entered the forest road leading into the jungle. A ranger had warned me of the presence of a herd of wild elephants, which, he said, were somewhere in the thicket near the road ahead pulling down trees. I also had reason to fear other wild animals. But I could not stop. A storm came up. Soon the lightning flashed cruelly, and the thunder rolled incessantly. I did not dare stop to light my carbide lamp for fear of being charged by some lurking beast, but kept right on into the jungle, seeing the road only by the ever-repeated streaks of lightning. Suddenly there came out of the darkness to my right the piercing, terrifying trumpeting of an elephant. Had the beast seen us? Was he going to charge? My hairs stood on end. With the throttle opened wide, I raced on through the wild night. All at once the catechist reached out his hand, laid it on my arm, and said, 'Jesus is with us.' How comforting was that word in that moment! Yes, Jesus was indeed with us and brought us safely through the terrors of that ride."

KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

Matt. 13, 24—30.

An important word in the vocabulary of the Christian Church is *zeal.* Zeal is a good thing if it is devoted to, and employed in, a good cause.

Zeal is warm interest in, eager devotion to, enthusiastic support of, a principle, policy, or undertaking.

A good issue deserves zealous devotion. Also the eager and determined pursuit of any laudable endeavor helps mightily to insure the success of such project.

However, there is such a thing as mistaken and misdirected zeal, and that is not a virtue, but a vice. One who zealously defends an unsound principle or supports and takes part in some misguided endeavor harms himself and becomes either a nuisance or a menace to orderly society. His very zeal and sincerity make him doubly dangerous.

Zeal in the kingdom of God is a very necessary and highly important characteristic of the Christian if its object is in agreement with the Law of the Kingdom. Zealous devotion to the dissemination of the Word, the extension of the Church, the saving of souls, the relief of human misery, is commendable. But let us guard against a zeal such as that which was shown by the servants in the Gospel-lesson before us, a zeal which is sometimes found among Christians to-day and which always does great harm to the cause of the Kingdom, a zeal which is here censured by the Lord Himself, and which we shall discuss in this hour under the question suggested by the text: —

Shall We Pluck Up the Tares?

1. The occasion for the question. *2. The Lord's answer thereto.*

1.

A. The connection. — A chapter of beautiful parables spoken from a little ship to a great multitude gathered on the shore of the Galilean Sea, not far from Capernaum. The subject of all of these parables, also of the one which we are discussing this morning, was the kingdom of God, the Christian Church.

The present story is taken from the life of agriculture; but we need not have lived on a farm to be able to understand it. In it is to be found the answer to a question which all those who become interested in the affairs of the kingdom of God are sure to ask sooner or later — what shall be done with the tares which grow up with the wheat?

Let us look into the situation and review the occasion for the question. We shall right here have to add to the lesson the Lord's own interpretation of His parable. Vv. 36—43.

B. The sowing of the seed. — V. 24. The man who sows the seed is, of course, the Lord. This also includes those human instruments which the Lord uses for the performance of the tasks assigned to them.

The field is the world. The seed is the Word. The mass of humanity is like a great barren expanse on which nothing worth while grows, or can grow, by itself. All men are lost in sin, wholly unable to save themselves. Ps. 14, 3; Eccl. 7, 20; 1 Cor. 2, 14.

God's earnest desire, however, is that sinners be saved. Ezek. 33, 11; 1 Tim. 2, 4. To remove the debt and guilt separating man from God, the Son of God was made a Substitute for mankind and offered on the cross as a sacrifice for the redemption of the world. Gal. 4, 5; 1 Pet. 2, 24; 1 John 2, 1. 2.

This full and finished salvation, with all the comforts, blessings, and joys flowing therefrom, God has encased in His Word, the Gospel of His grace in Christ Jesus. In this Word He offers whatever the sinner may need for his soul's welfare on earth and in heaven. This Word He sows — or causes it to be sown — wherever human beings can be gotten together to hear it. It is the good seed, because out of it grows a harvest of peace and joy. Without it no harvest. Rom. 10, 14—17. Wherever and whenever the Gospel is accepted, the good seed has taken root, and a harvest of saved souls is in prospect. The sowing of the seed is going on at this very moment.

C. Tares appear. — Vv. 25—28 a. Weeds in the wheat and other growing grains, in field and garden, are a common sight; the consequences of sin, Gen. 3, 17—19; damaging to the crops, irritating to the husbandman. In this case doubly vexing, because an enemy was responsible, — not by any means a far-fetched supposition.

The interpretation, vv. 38b. 39a. Jesus here not only teaches the existence of a devil, but also tells us something about the activities of this spirit of evil. The devil, the "strong man armed," intent upon keeping his own in peace, does not at all intend to remain inactive when "the Stronger than he" begins to take from him his spoils and encroaches upon what he thinks is his own realm and dominion. He cannot bear to see human souls saved for heaven. His desire is to devour, destroy, etc. 1 Pet. 5, 8.

To gain his sinister end, he not only pulls up the wheat where he can do so, but with an even greater cunning and wicked design sows tares among the wheat. He persecutes the Christian and in other ways endeavors to make his spiritual and temporal life miserable; for he spreads the net of his temptations in the Christian's way, plays upon his weaknesses, and through the exercise of the many powerful and destroying influences which he controls, draws him away from his God, his Church, his salvation. But just as frequently, and for the same purpose, the devil "plants," maintains and multiplies, his servants, supporters, allies — the children of this

world — alongside of, and in the midst of, God's children and through them endeavors to crowd out, choke, overwhelm, the disciples of Christ, at least, to keep the Church from growing and to stop its work.

He still works "while men sleep." Not only does he never rest, but he takes particular advantage of the tendency to carelessness and indifference among Christian people; and while the Church "sleeps," he reaps a growing harvest of souls destroyed.

He that has eyes to see, let him see, for what is here related is going on all around us in this very day. And since it has become quite fashionable to deny the existence of a devil, which is one way of playing into the devil's hands, it is the more necessary that we hear and see the facts here set forth.

D. The servants take a hand. — Vv. 27. 28. Good servants. Not only does the situation deeply disturb them, but they even offer their services for the task of pulling up the tares, a willingness not generally noted in farm-hands and other employees. Their interest and concern seem well justified in themselves; for tares are a grave menace to a wheat-field; they hurt the growing grain and reduce the yield; they have a tendency to increase and to cover the entire field; they are the curse of all growing things, etc. Who that understands the situation does not share the indignation of these servants and would not gladly join in a campaign to rid the earth of all tares?

Citizens of the kingdom of God are not, cannot be, indifferent to the presence of the wicked everywhere in this world, to their number, might, and influence, to the damage they cause the Church. To be idle while the enemy is active is treason and surrender. Shall the wicked have things their own way? "No indeed," is the unanimous declaration of God's people.

But what is to be done? "Pluck them up," say some. If the wicked will not repent, shall they continue to live? "They shall not," is the verdict. Many pages of history are red with the blood of the thousands who, because they refused to become Christians, perished under cruel persecutions instigated by men occupying positions of leadership in Christianity. (Refer also to Roman persecutions of the present day, to the millennial hopes of some Protestants, to those denominations which inject themselves into legislation and law enforcement.) Is all this proper? Shall the tares be rooted up?

2.

The Lord's answer, vv. 29. 30. These words are intended for the setting forth of two important considerations.

A. The disciples must not pluck up the tares.

1. The man in the parable says, v. 29. Two explanations are possible. Either the tares could not easily be distinguished from the

wheat (there are weeds of that kind), or the roots of both were so interwoven that the uprooting of the one might bring the other up also. The latter seems the more likely, since the servants have already been able to recognize the tares. At any rate, the husbandman wanted it understood that the gathering up of the tares was not the duty or privilege of the servants, at least, was not to be done at that time.

2. The application is easily made. Disposing of the wicked in this world through the employment of force is not the duty or prerogative of the Christian. Not only would such a procedure be wholly foreign to God's loving purpose and the Savior's burning desire to save, not only would it be incompatible with the character and genius of the kingdom of God and contrary to the law of charity, which governs the life of all Christian people; but the disciples themselves would suffer in the very act of visiting destruction upon the ungodly. After all, what human eye can definitely distinguish between the believer and the unbeliever? Moreover, even the children of this world are in their way an important factor in present-day civilization. It is impossible to put them and their affairs suddenly and violently out of existence without upsetting the general arrangement of things of this world and thus seriously endangering the welfare of the Christian Church itself. What would become of government, business, education, industry, commerce, etc., — important cogs in the machinery which the Church needs in its work, — if all unbelievers were to be destroyed by the forces of Christianity? Besides, what a carnage would result, what awful scenes! And how many Christians would themselves miserably perish! not to mention the hatred, bitterness, lust of blood, which in the hearts of Christian leaders and their followers would supplant every needful and essential Christian virtue. "No," says Jesus, "there must be no rooting up."

This is a repudiation of the use of force and violence on the part of the Christian Church in its dealings with the ungodly; persecution, legislation, law enforcement, are not spiritual, but carnal weapons. The sword was given to the civil government, not to the Church. There remains, then, no hope of a millennium on earth; for that would presuppose the uprooting and violent destruction of the wicked while the earth still stood.

3. But what, in view of all this, becomes of the divine ordinances of church discipline? There is no difficulty here. Jesus says, the field is the world (not the Church). The impenitent sinner must indeed be put out of the church. Matt. 18. However, we cannot put him out of the world; we may and must excommunicate him, but we cannot execute him; his standing as a church-member is within the church's discretion, but not so his life.

B. We need not pluck up the tares. We need not even fear them. Vv. 30. 40. 41. 42.

1. The Lord will take care of the wheat on His field. While the tares will increase, — the wicked apparently prosper as time hastens on to its end, — the wheat will also grow, the Church will continue its existence, carry on its work, finish its destiny, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; it will even continue to win victories in the midst of its enemies and bring some harvest sheaves out of the very realm of the devil. (Foreign Missions.)

2. And at the world's end the Lord Himself will take direct charge of the situation. Having always known the difference between the tares and the wheat, He will now separate the two. It will have availed the tares nothing to have stood among the wheat. They and the enemy that sowed them will together be consigned to eternal darkness. Cp. Matt. 25, 31 ff.

We conclude that the disciples of Christ are to guard carefully against all measures of force and compulsion in their campaign to save the world for Christ. The weapons with which they fight, the tools with which they work, are spiritual, the Word and prayer. If these will not avail, if the world refuses to hear and heed when it is invited, the work of the disciples is done. Not persecution, but persuasion alone will bring in a harvest of saved souls.

Let us by all means make sure that we are among the wheat, that by a living faith in Jesus Christ we have laid hold upon the hope of salvation and that by God's help we remain faithful to the end. And let us then help to bring in those who are still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, so that God's final harvest of saved souls may be great.

Then, when at last the Lord will forever put out of His sight those who persisted in sin and impenitence, we shall by the mercy of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, be kept unto salvation.

Illustrations.

The Sons of Thunder. Luke 17, 11 ff.

Peter taking the sword. John 18, 10 f.

"My kingdom is not of this world." John 18, 36.

When Peter had been imprisoned by Herod (Acts 12), the congregation at Jerusalem did not form a mob, march to the prison in a body, release Peter, and destroy his captors. The Christians gathered peaceably in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, and prayed. We know the results.

It has always been the practise of Islam to seek by violence to convert the world to Mohammedanism. Those who refused to yield were persecuted. The result — hundreds of thousands were brutally butchered, and the whole world speaks of the "bloody Turk." The principle which governs Christianity's efforts to save a lost world is the very opposite.

"The Lord pictures the devil as one who, while men sleep, throws out his seed and then goes away, so that no one may know who has done the evil deed. This is to show that the devil often cleverly disguises himself in order that no one may recognize him. This is to be seen when he sows false prophets in the midst of Christianity. These at first conduct themselves in a manner most innocent and engaging. God seems to be with them everywhere and the devil a thousand miles away. What is to be seen and heard about them appears to be purely the Word, name, and work of God. It is cleverly done. But as soon as some one insists on the right interpretation of the Word of God and Christian faith that fruit may grow of it, they at once put themselves in opposition to this and want the field for themselves alone. . . . Paul says, 'There must be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.'" 1 Cor. 11, 19. — *Luther.* K. KRETZSCHMAR.

Septuagesima Sunday.

Matt. 20, 1—16.

(A choice of introductions.)

1.

Two of the most general of the many wrong impressions about life in the kingdom of God are: 1) that one may live in the kingdom of God without labor; 2) that the laborer in God's kingdom may demand a reward for his services. The words of to-day's Gospel-lesson were spoken and are here recorded for the purpose of correcting these false impressions. We shall group its lessons under the general heading (see theme).

2.

The parables of Jesus were not merely interesting stories and comparisons intended for the diversion of His hearers. They all had a very serious and lofty purpose. They were spoken and are here written chiefly in order that the character, work, and end of the kingdom of God may be the better understood and the more fully appreciated by God's people. They lend power and appeal to the divine teachings of the God-man Jesus Christ. They are the art-glass windows in the glorious temple of the Gospel-story.

Incidentally, the parables of Jesus enable us to find not only certain surprising similarities between the kingdom of God and some phases of temporal life, but still more striking differences between the spiritual concerns of God's kingdom and the affairs of this world.

Any one who reverently studies the parables of, for instance, the Good Shepherd, the Seed and the Soils, the Leaven and the Lump, the Mustard-seed, and others, together with the lessons they convey,

cannot fail to see the harmony and aptness of the comparisons given and to profit by the applications so easily made.

And again, one need only refer to the parables of the Pharisee and the Publican, the Great Supper, the Wise and the Foolish Virgins, the Rich Man and Lazarus, to show how great the difference is between the kingdom of God and the sphere of this world.

(If the preacher prefers, he may, instead of making mere general statements, select a parable from each of these groups — say, that of the Good Shepherd and that of the Pharisee and the Publican — and bring out the contrasts referred to in detail.)

To-day's parable is in a class by itself inasmuch as it united in a single story both of the elements just mentioned. Its first part, as we shall see, has its counterpart in the scheme of temporal things. But the second portion wholly disagrees with our ordinary standards of conduct and hence is worthy of particular attention and study.

With these considerations in mind we take up discussion of this parable, grouping its parts under the general head: —

In the Lord's Vineyard.

We shall dwell in turn on —

1. The call into the Lord's vineyard;
2. The labor in the Lord's vineyard;
3. The rewards of the Lord's vineyard.

1.

Concerning the call into the vineyard we read vv. 1—7. There is nothing unusual in the situation. It is repeating itself to-day. Compare farmers coming to town for harvest hands. It illustrates the call of human beings into the vineyard of the Lord.

A. What is that vineyard and the call into it?

1. The Lord's vineyard often referred to in the Bible. Cf. Ps. 80, 15; Is. 3, 14. A beautiful and expressive simile. The Lord's vineyard is the kingdom of God on earth, first as represented by Israel of old, later as established in the Church of Jesus Christ. God is the Husbandman, Creator, Owner, Ruler; Jesus, the Vine. John 15, 1 ff. Having loved the sinful world and given His only Son as a sacrifice for the redemption of sinners, God is the sole Author and Owner of that vineyard. Having through His innocent life and His vicarious suffering and death delivered men from sin and death, Jesus Christ is the only Source of spiritual life in that vineyard. Christians are the branches, inasmuch as through faith in Jesus they have become new creatures and now live and move and have their being in their Savior. This great invisible realm of the holy Christian Church, this body of all true Christians here and everywhere, is the Lord's vineyard.

2. The call into this vineyard is that invitation to mankind by which the world is informed of the existence of the Lord's vineyard, of the divine will that all men be saved, of the redemption that made salvation possible, of the way by which the individual sinner comes into possession of that salvation; it is the urgent and insistent appeal to all sinners to come into the vineyard without delay. Is. 55. This call is being heard wherever the Gospel reaches the ears of men; you are hearing it at this very moment.

B. Where does the call find mankind?

1. In the market-place, i. e., outside of, and far away from, the vineyard. No man is born into the Lord's kingdom when he comes into this world; he is a born sinner, John 3, 6; Job 14, 4. Therefore by birth and nature he is an alien to the kingdom of God, has no connection whatever with the Lord's vineyard. That applies to all mankind without distinction; it was your condition and mine before our regeneration and conversion to faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior; and if you are not yet converted, it is your condition still.

This is indeed a pitiable state, here as well as hereafter. — Note also: —

2. "All the day idle." — Man, being what he is by nature, is not a worker, but a shirker, before God. Since he is by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," his works, as far as his relation to the Church of God is concerned, are wholly evil. This applies not only to those human beings who are openly wicked and godless, but also to the many who, though not converted, deceive themselves into thinking that their efforts and deeds of external respectability and righteousness are in themselves acceptable to God and will win heaven for them. Cf. Is. 64, 6; Luke 18, 10 ff. (the Pharisee). However morally excellent and fruitful a man's natural life may seem to be, this has some value only for his temporal existence, but none in the Kingdom of Grace; it is mere "works of the Law," by which no man can be justified. Gal. 2, 16. As far as man's redemption from sin and his standing in the kingdom of heaven are concerned, the sinner is by nature wholly helpless, an idler in the market-place.

C. How does the call reach the ears of men?

1. Man does not seek the vineyard. — Of himself he knows nothing about God's gracious will to save nor about the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. He may by his natural knowledge of the Law learn to recognize his lost estate, but human reason knows no answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Even when the Gospel call reaches man's physical ears, he has no power to rise and accept the invitation; he cannot by his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, etc.

2. It is God who comes to man. — Moved deeply by His love and sympathy for lost mankind, God once sent His Son into this world and made Him a sacrifice for man's sin, thus reconciling the world unto Himself. Moved by this same grace, He sends out His messengers with the Gospel call: "Come, for all things are now ready." As often as the voice of the Gospel of salvation reaches your ears, you are hearing this call; and blessed are you, for you are hearing it to-day. This call offers you all the blessings of heaven — forgiveness of all your sins, comfort and joy on your journey through life, victory over the crafty and powerful enemies of your soul, a favorable verdict in the final Judgment, eternal life and peace in heaven. All this is yours if you will but lay hold of it with the outstretched hand of faith.

Blessed are they who hear and heed the Lord's invitation to come into His vineyard.

However, blessings and privileges in the kingdom of God lead to obligations and responsibilities. The call into the vineyard is not only a proffer of great blessings, but also an assignment of great tasks.

2.

The householder in the parable was not seeking those who would merely eat the grapes and drink the wine the vineyard yielded; he had gone out to hire *laborers.*

A. Labor, a natural and essential factor in life.

1. We find nothing out of the ordinary in the action of the man who tells those whom he sends into his vineyard that he expects a certain amount of labor from them. In fact, it would be singular if this were not the case. Does a farmer hire harvest hands in order that these may loaf, eat, and sleep?

2. Man was made for labor. Adam, even before he became a sinner, was placed in the Garden as the keeper of it, a position requiring the assumption of responsibility as well as the application of energy. The wonderful physical and mental capacities with which man is endowed by nature were given him for useful employment. The urge to be active is natural. Besides, the human machine must move if it is to continue to live. Idleness leads to corruption, decay.

3. Let us apply this to the kingdom of God. When God makes men Christians, He is hiring laborers. Man is taken into His kingdom with all his mental and physical equipment; he brings along the great tool-chest of his capacities and possessions. In addition, he is given in conversion certain spiritual powers and assets, more varied and wonderful even than those of his body and mind.

The possession of this superb equipment naturally leads to the exercise and use of it. To be a laborer in the kingdom of God is

a normal existence. No real Christian feels spiritually well unless he is active in some phase of church-work, even as he who does no church-work is on the way to spiritual decay and the final ruin of his soul and commits spiritual suicide.

To labor in God's kingdom is therefore not a virtue by which one merits reward, as some seem to think, but simply a natural, essential activity of *spiritual* life.

B. Labor is necessary.

1. In his natural life man owes it to himself, his God, his fellow-man, to be active, to be constructively busy. Labor is a moral obligation. The idler is a delinquent before God and violates his obligation toward his fellow-men. "If any would not work, neither should he eat."

Besides, there is always much work to do in this world. The welfare of society, in fact, depends upon the conscientious participation of every human being in the world's work.

2. In the kingdom of God the situation is very similar. Every Christian is morally obligated to be a laborer in the vineyard. Eph. 2, 10; Col. 1, 10; Titus 2, 14. How can he look God in the face if he is not conscientiously busy at some church-work? In addition, Christians in the Kingdom are dependent upon each other, need each other, and therefore owe each other service and assistance. Compare the members of the human body. 1 Cor. 12.

Moreover, there is much work to be done. Compare with the activities in a vineyard. There is the seed of the Word to be sown; there are souls to be won, children to be brought in, the stray sheep to be gathered, churches and schools to be built; there is mission-work to be supported, charity to be exercised, spiritual warfare to be waged, etc., etc. For all these activities God has endowed His people with powers and possessions; they can plan, resolve, speak, work, walk, give, etc. — Does this include us also? And if so, what are we doing to live up to our obligations and to fulfil our mission as inhabitants of His vineyard? Are we, at least in part, to blame for the lamentable fact that the kingdom of God is not making the conquests that it might; that in this world there are still so many souls that are not yet won for Jesus; that the treasuries of the Church are in arrears?

There is no place for the idler in the Church. No one is too young to work; there is something also the young can do ("early in the morning"); nor is any one too old for useful service, even if he can do no more than pray ("the eleventh hour"). Paraphrasing the well-known challenge of Moses (Num. 11, 29), the Lord might well confront us to-day with the call, "Would that all of My people were workers!"

Are you a citizen of the Kingdom? If not, you are before God still an idler in the market-place, no matter how busy you may be in the temporal affairs of this world. Come into the vineyard without delay; your welfare for time and eternity depends upon it. Take part in the biggest business going on in the world to-day, etc. — And if through the grace of God you are already a member of "Zion's city," are you a worker or an idler? There is still much work to do, and the Lord has called you to do it. Take your cue from the blest Redeemer, who said: John 9, 4.

Labor suggests wages, reward. What does the text say about this?

3.

We now come to the most striking part of this parable; it sets forth the chief purpose for which this comparison was uttered. Vv. 8—16.

A. The connection.

The previous chapter ends with a unique conversation between Peter, who had asked a question, and the Lord, who answered it. Chap. 19, 27—30. Here was a question wholly unworthy of a disciple, for it betrayed a spirit of bargaining which is entirely foreign, as we shall see, to the character of the kingdom of God. However, the Master very graciously accepted the question and gave an answer full of glorious and inspiring promises.

Jesus evidently wanted to prevent a misunderstanding of His promise and to offer a commentary to His statement. V. 30. The disciples were not to conclude that rewards could be demanded by them; that their service and loyalty had put their Master under obligations to them. For he who thus thought himself entitled to *first* consideration might easily find himself *last* in the Kingdom and without any consideration at all. Hence the parable in our text.

B. The action in the parable.

The evening has come; the day's work is done. The householder "pays off" his laborers. But what a strange "settlement"! Things are not done that way among men on earth. The laborer is worthy of his hire. Are not our natural sympathies with the servant who complains of unfair treatment? Do not human standards of equity and fair dealing demand that he who has borne the burden and heat of the day be given a larger wage than is handed out to him who was hired only an hour before "quitting time"? Yes, man in his dealings with his fellow-men may demand an adequate reward for services rendered, and to withhold it from him is a sin against the Seventh Commandment. Jer. 22, 13.

The parable, however, was intended to teach, not how things are done in this world, but how they are done in the kingdom of God. There is a fundamental difference.

C. The laborers in the Lord's vineyard rewarded.

1. Yes, there will be rewards. — We have the Lord's own promises to this effect. The text before us is intended to convey such an assurance. Similar statements are found Deut. 11, 13—15; Is. 3, 10; Matt. 16, 27; 19, 28 f.; Mark 10, 21; Luke 6, 35; 1 Cor. 3, 8; Rev. 22, 12. These are not mere nice-sounding phrases which do not really mean what they say. The Lord has ever kept, and still keeps, faith with His people; His promises invariably come true.

There are rewards in this life, such as increased spiritual blessings, inward peace and lasting joy, the soul-satisfying comforts and inner assurances of which the children of this world know nothing. No faithful servant of the Lord is without them. Also, there are often very signal material benefits which the Lord showers upon His loyal laborers, such as health, a happy home life, success, protection, deliverance, often even wealth and honors, etc. Examples: Noah, Abraham, Lot, Job, David, Solomon, etc. No sincere Christian and diligent laborer in the Church has reason to complain that God is indifferent to the toil and sacrifices of His servants, etc.

And at last there will be the reward of glory and abundant joy in heaven meted out to those who have been faithful to the end. Matt. 25, 21. 34—40; Rev. 2, 10.

What a glorious, encouraging, comforting thought for all those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day in serving their Lord in His vineyard!

2. What manner of reward is this, and how is it meted out? — This question is very much in order in view of the strange procedure recorded in the parable. It is clear that the reward is not deserved; it is not a reward of merit. We have not put God under obligation to us by our labors and sacrifices. We are not in a position to demand anything from Him, nor could we justly reproach Him if He chose to withhold recognition of our services or apparently rewarded others more generously than us. He who has served God for reward did not really serve Him at all; he worked only for his personal gain. And though he may have labored with apparent zeal and devotion and have sacrificed most generously, so that he feels justified in expecting to be among the "first" to be recognized in the final accounting, he will to his surprise find himself "last," *i. e.,* wholly ignored and excluded, while some humble Christian who in his unpretentious manner served as though he were among the last to deserve standing in the Kingdom will find himself among the first on that day.

God's reward will be a *reward of grace,* given on His own personal and loving initiative, without any merit or worthiness in us. And it will be meted out to the faithful servants as God Himself shall please, without regard for the standards that man has made;

the size, manner, and value are to be determined by God alone. For: Rom. 11, 33—35; 1 Cor. 12, 11.

3. Explanation and justification of this procedure. — The householder in the text reminds the complaining workman (a) of the original agreement, (b) of His own goodness, (c) of the fact that he really owes the laborer nothing. Every Christian will bear in mind that he is but a creature of God and that it is simply out of the range of possibilities that the Creator should ever owe His creatures anything. Furthermore, he knows himself to be already so deeply indebted to his divine Lord for the abundance of the spiritual and temporal gifts with which he has been, and daily is, blessed that his most faithful service and self-denying sacrifices could not pay for even a fraction of them. And finally, he is so strongly conscious of his many transgressions and daily misuses of the Lord's good gifts that he never gets through marveling at the mercy which still daily blesses him, etc.

If these are your sentiments as a faithful worker in the Lord's vineyard, you will be only too happy to employ the opportunities God has given you, and the talents with which He has endowed you, in grateful and unselfish service, and you will accept the rewards bestowed by your merciful Benefactor with wondering humility, knowing that they only add to your responsibilities and are designed to make you more faithful and loyal.

This, then, is the call into, the labor within, and the reward of, the vineyard. God be praised for His gracious call, etc.! Let us all the days of our lives give to the service of our blessed Lord all we are and have and can do, and "in due time we shall reap if we faint not."

Illustrations.

It sometimes happens that the drones in a beehive, which are idlers and gather no honey, so increase in number that the working bees, for self-protection, in united action, fall on the sluggards and destroy them. Idlers in the Church not only heap up a burden of guilt against themselves, they also endanger the welfare of the working members and do not deserve to share in the blessings of the Kingdom.

Karamin, the Russian traveler, observing Lavater's diligence in studying, visiting the sick, and relieving the poor, was greatly surprised and said, "Whence have you so much strength of mind and power of endurance?" "My friend," replied he, "man rarely wants the power to work when he possesses the will. The more I labor in the discharge of my duties, the more ability and inclination to labor do I constantly find within myself."

The greatest reward is not the pay received for services rendered, but the consciousness of having done a good thing well. A dog does not watch the more faithfully because of a dainty morsel given him, nor does the bird sing the more sweetly in return for the grain thrown out to him. Service for the joy of serving is the faithful servant's greatest satisfaction and highest reward.

KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

Sexagesima Sunday.

Luke 8, 4—15.

Parallel passages: Matt. 13, 3 ff.; Mark 4, 3 ff.

(Choice of introductions.)

1.

Noteworthy things happen when the Word of God comes in contact with the minds of men. Some are disappointing, tragic; others are delightful, even glorious; all are interesting. In the entire Christian literature nothing so aptly illustrates this as the parable before us. Its obvious heading is: "The Seed and the Soils."

2.

The history of Christianity is simply the record of the presence, power, progress, of the Word of God in this world. When once the redeeming work was done and the gates of divine grace were now open to mankind, it remained that the world be told of what Jesus had done, so that sinners everywhere might hear and be saved. This implied the preaching of the Word.

We are all familiar with the Lord's final commission to His disciples before He removed His visible presence from them, "Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature." We also know that the chief effect of that mighty miracle on Pentecost day was the preaching of the Word on the part of the inspired messengers. Out into all the world they went, and the passing of the centuries from that day to this has not been able to efface the imprint left on the pages of the world's history by these preachers.

It was the Word which established and maintained the greatest and most influential institution the world has known, the Christian Church; which changed howling wildernesses into blooming gardens of God; which brought to the world everything good enjoyed by mankind to-day; and which is still the one great pivot around which our civilization turns.

Nations and individuals have perished because they opposed that Word, while other individuals and nations have risen to greatness because they accepted it. And when at last the universe is rolled

up like a scroll, it will be because the Word has fulfilled its mission and its work on earth is done.

The text before us gives us an opportunity to study briefly the results of the Word of God when reaching the hearts of men. Presenting the theme for this sermon in the spirit of the parable itself, I invite your devout attention to the discussion of

The Seed and the Soils.

Following the Lord's own line of thought in this passage, we shall dwell on —

1. The presentation of the parable;
2. The interpretation of the parable;
3. The application of the parable.

1.

Mark the interesting features of this story.

A. It is a simple, homely story, easily followed and understood even by children. Possibly, while Jesus was talking to the multitude on that sloping shore of the Galilean Sea, a peasant was actually walking up and down a near-by field sowing his seed, the rhythmic swing of his arm visible to all who were gathered there. And though seed-sowing in the fields of our own country is rarely done by hand in this our day, it does not take an unusual imagination to visualize a farmer walking back and forth upon his field scattering seed as the swing of his arm keeps time with each plodding step.

B. It was and is an important activity, this sowing of the seed; very necessary for the life and well-being of the world. What indeed would become of humanity if farmers stopped sowing seed. Erecting great buildings, laying and operating railroads, educating nations, writing books, governing an empire, winning a war, may all look bigger, seem greater and more important; but all of these activities would cease if the sowing of seed stopped. It is essential that we should realize the importance of this prosy task around which the Lord has woven this interesting parable.

C. And now let us dwell on the details of the story. The hand of the sower broadcasts the seed. It is good seed. In it there lives the power to germinate, and grow, and yield a harvest. But it must have good soil.

Now follow the grains as they fall. Close by is a path, running along the edge of the field. The seed which falls on its hard, smooth surface cannot penetrate and take root. The birds which follow the sower espy it, flutter down upon it, and snatch it up before a softening rain can come to its aid. No harvest will be reaped on that path. What grains remain are soon trodden under foot by those who pass that way.

Look in another direction. Here to the left is a rise in the soil. There is a rocky base there, and it is very close to the surface. The shallow layer of earth, having been well warmed by the spring sunshine, received the seed readily, enables it to take root quickly, and to send up an early blade, possibly even to start an ear. But there will be no harvest there. Presently it will rain but rarely; hot, dry winds will blow, and the stalks of grain on this rocky rise, having no opportunity to send down deep roots after the moisture under the surface, will dry up and wither away.

Further on there is an apparently fertile corner in the field. The earth is loose and loamy. The seed falls upon it and has no difficulty in sending down its roots and pushing up a tender green stalk. But last year thorns grew in this place, and though the vines were cut down and carried away, the roots were left in the ground. These will shortly send up vigorous new shoots, and before harvest time has come, the blades and ears of the good seed will have been choked and overwhelmed by the rank and worthless thorn vines.

How tragic these experiences! But the sower keeps right on sowing, in spite of what he knows is going to happen to some of the grains of seed. After all, he knows that his seed is good and that much of it will fall on good ground. There it takes root and grows. The rains come in their season, the sun shines. The blades grow into stalks, the stalks shoot up the ears, the ears are soon filled with swelling grain. The dry, hot weeks which now follow, instead of killing the waving, swaying stems, mature and harden the grain and prepare the field for the harvest.

The harvest day comes. The reapers go out and gather in gratefully what the field so abundantly yields.

Delightful parable. But what does it mean in this connection? The disciples asked, v. 9. We, too, want to know.

2.

The Lord's own interpretation. Vv. 11—15.

A. The sower. — The sower, of course, is God Himself. It is God who loves mankind, takes pity upon a world lost in sins, desires and determines to save the lost. It is He who has worked out the great plan of redemption through the sacrifice of His Son for the sins of mankind; who wants all men to know, possess, enjoy, what has been done for them; who earnestly wishes to raise a harvest of saved souls. To carry out His intention, He works not only personally and directly, but especially through the employment of certain means.

B. The seed. — This is the Word, the divine message as recorded in the Holy Scriptures existing in Jesus' time; the Word as spoken by Christ Himself and as, later on, proclaimed by the tongue and pen of those heroic men of God who "spake as they were moved

by the Holy Ghost." This Word, as we find it to-day written on the pages of the Holy Book, truthful and eternally reliable, is still the seed out of which saved souls grow for heaven's harvest. Particularly it is the Gospel of Christ which is "the power of God unto salvation," etc.

It seems a weak and insignificant thing indeed, this simple Word, entirely inadequate for the stupendous task of saving a lost world. Many, even of those who use it, have come to think little of it, to lose faith in its power, and to seek other means with which to save the souls of men and build the kingdom of God. But there is nothing like it anywhere in this world, nor has it lost even a fraction of its germinating power. It is still the source of real life, for in it lives that great Fountain of Life who says of that Word, "If ye continue in My Word," etc. John 8, 31. 32. But, like seed, the Word must be sown.

C. The sowing. — The Word is sown through the dissemination of the Bible. The Bible in your home is the good seed ready for its work in your heart. It is also sown through preaching and teaching and in the Holy Sacraments. The preacher in your pulpit, the teachers in your school and Sunday-school, the fathers and mothers who teach their children to know the Lord and to pray to Him, the missionaries who make known the saving Gospel to benighted people everywhere, the printing-houses which print and spread Christian literature, — all these are the Lord's hands used by Him for the sowing of the good seed.

Is not the good seed being sown richly to you and in your midst? No need to wait for some special revelation, for some particular miracle; accept the Word for your own salvation and spread it for the salvation of others; no more than that is needed, no less will do.

What happens when the good seed is sown?

D. The results of the sowing. — Not in every case is there glad reception, faith, growth, a harvest.

1. There are sin-hardened hearts, stubbornly resisting, impenitent, wholly indifferent. When the Word reaches their ears, as it sometimes does, either they themselves wilfully reject it, or the devil provides some diversion, distraction, or other obstacle to keep the Word from making a lasting impression. The number of such people is on the increase, even in our congregations.

2. There are hearts of shallow soil, hearers who seem most ready to accept the Word, whose hearts quickly take fire and burn with apparent enthusiasm and devotion, who are ready with quick promises of eternal faithfulness. But what happens when trials and conflicts come, when sacrifices and self-denial are required, when losses and

persecutions must be borne for Jesus' sake? The fire dies down, the voice of loyal profession is silent, the brave, sword-swinging Peter is turned into a cowardly, denying Simon. Follows backsliding, defection, surrender to the enemy, as in the times of the first centuries of persecution. There are numerous examples in the history of our own congregation.

3. There are hearts full of thorns. These, too, at first accept the Word, seem glad in the possession of spiritual blessings, begin with being willing members and workers in the church. There is life and growth. Soon, however, there follows security, cessation of watchfulness, exposing oneself to evil influences, association with the enemies of the Church, etc. It is then that the affections of the flesh, like weeds that were not wholly rooted up, begin again to grow and thrive. Riches, pleasures, worldly ambitions, prosperity, even worries and cares, begin to take up more and more time and interest. Spiritual life begins to grow weak, the interests of the kingdom of God are crowded into the background, the willingness to work wanes, etc. Eventually there is cessation of Bible-reading and prayer, absence from church and the Lord's Table, wasting away of soul life, spiritual death. The latter state then is far worse than the first. Many are going this way to-day, even in our own congregation and denomination, etc. But let us turn to the enjoyable fact that, after all,

4. There are still hearts in which the good seed of the Word finds lodgment and grows up into a glorious harvest. For God said: "As the rain cometh down," etc. Is. 55, 10. 11. It is not because of inherent excellence or through powers of their own, but through the operation of the Holy Spirit that such hearts acknowledge the truth of the Word, reach out for, and lay hold of, the Gospel gifts of forgiveness, comfort, help, and hope, become new creatures in Christ, begin to be active in serving God and their neighbor according to the grace measured out to them, some thirtyfold, etc., and remain faithful to the end.

There have been many millions of these throughout the history of the Christian Church, there are many millions of them to-day, and there will be further millions of saved souls as the Gospel proceeds to win one victory after the other in the far countries of the world.

The Last Day will be the great harvest day, on which all the saved souls will be gathered into the home of eternal glory. What a great and joyful day that will be, and how we shall delight our eyes with the sight of the vast throng which will be gathered in the palace of the King for the marriage of the Lamb!

Will you be there?

May this question ring in your ears as we now conclude the discussion.

3.

What was the Lord's purpose in relating this parable?

A. Surely it was not merely to show in a historial manner what the experiences of the Gospel were and would be. The words "He that hath ears," etc., v. 8, suggest the application He intended. As a matter of fact, Jesus encountered the various kinds of hearers wherever He stopped to preach, even in the larger circle of His disciples. It was time that some of them should begin to examine themselves and give serious thought to the manner in which they were receiving the Word. This leads us to bring the application up to the present date and hour.

B. What kind of hearer are you? Ask yourself this question to-day and take home whatever instruction, admonition, warning, or encouragement applies to you.

1. Are you in the class of wayside hearers? Has it happened that you have at times stubbornly refused to accept the Word — hardened your heart against certain instructions, admonitions, warnings, refused to repent of certain sins, to humble yourself before those whom you had wronged, to forgive certain debtors, to correct your life in certain habits and improper practises? Are you involved in some such situation to-day? Have you grown cold and indifferent toward the Law and the Gospel? Are you permitting the devil to carry off the lessons of a Sunday's sermon before you can put them into practise on Monday?

2. Or do you perhaps find yourself shallow soil? Are you easily stirred up and warmed by appeals from the Word only to become just as quickly depressed by discouragements and other disheartening experiences? Is your faith constant? Is your interest in the things of the kingdom of God always at an even temperature? Are you ever ready for works of service and charity? Do you never grow weary in well-doing and in making sacrifices? Or have you lost that first exalted faith, that first burning love, that once so lively interest, because troubles and trials came into your life and you could not meet them with courage and hope?

3. Or has your life become a soil full of thorns and thistles, tares and weeds? Do you keep down the flesh, avoid temptations to sin, seek first the kingdom of God, and keep yourself unspotted from the world? Or have you perhaps already become careless about the evil impulses that, like wild animals, ought to lie chained and caged within you? Are the lusts of the flesh and the selfish desires of your Old Adam taking new root and sending up a new growth of evil into your spiritual life?

Do you permit your money, your business, your ambitions, your home, your friends, your pleasures, your cares, etc., to come between your God, your faith, your church, and yourself?

In brief, if there is anything wrong in connection with your hearing of the Word, whatever it may be, take warning to-day. Now is the time to seek God penitently, to ask for pardon and grace in Jesus' name and to pray that God may renew your heart through His Holy Spirit and "work in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure."

4. But if your heart is good soil for the seed of the Word and you can honestly say that you gladly hear the Word of God and keep it; if you delight in coming to the house of God and taking part in the works of the kingdom of God; if you by daily contrition and repentance overcome the evil within you, renounce the devil and all his works, and are fruitful unto all good works, blessed are you. But do not praise yourself as though you were naturally better than others. To God alone and His undeserved mercy belong all honor, praise, and glory. And continue, by the help of God, in the way in which you have come thus far; it is a happy way, and it will lead at last to the greatest harvest of joy in heaven.

And now: "Almighty God, Thy Word is cast like seed into the ground," etc. (*Ev. Luth. Hymn-book,* No. 13.)

Illustrations.

The effects of Jeremiah's preaching upon the Jews, Jer. 42, 43. 44.

How Stephen's preaching was received, Acts 7.

The days of prosperity which came to the Church during the reign of Constantine would have been an unmixed blessing to the Christians of that day if they had not also brought with them the temptation to become secure and indifferent. As it was, an era which was very favorable to the dissemination of the Gospel and the extension of the Kingdom also saw the sowing of the seed from which popery later sprang. Times of material well-being are never conducive to the strengthening of the inward life of the Church and the individual Christian. ———

"If you stood in a street where the traffic is abundant and incessant, where the constant thunder of rumbling wheels creates a din, it would be difficult to preach so as to command an audience, for the abundant sound would prevent all hearing. To a great extent the mass of mankind is just in that position as to the joyful sound of the Gospel. The rumbling of the wheels of commerce, the noise of trade and the cries of competition, the whirl of cares, and the riot of pleasures — all these drown the persuasive voice of heavenly love, so that men hear no more of it than they would hear of a pin falling in the midst of a hurricane at sea. Only when the ear is stopped to the distracting noises of the world around, can the heart hear and absorb the still small voice of the Gospel." KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

Luke 18, 31—43.

Parallels: Matt. 20, 29 ff.; Mark 10, 46 ff.

In dealing with men's bodies, Jesus ever had their souls in mind; there can be no doubt about that. Nearly all the miracles He performed conferred upon those with whom He dealt some material gift and blessing. But all of these were intended for the revival of human souls and the enriching of the spiritual life; for He had come to seek and to save that which was lost.

This may be taken in a general way, inasmuch as the miracles of Jesus, on the one hand, supported His claim that He had come from God and was Himself the Son of God and, on the other hand, gave to His words of information, admonition, promise, and comfort the stamp of truth, thus confirming the faith of those who accepted Him and His Word, as John says: "These [signs] are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."

However, there is also a particular sense in which the material gifts were designed for some spiritual good. Often the bodily need the Lord encountered was but a type of some existing spiritual want, and Jesus, in giving relief, meant to bring into consciousness the presence of that deeper want and call attention to His mission as the Savior of souls and Giver of all spiritual gifts. Thus He drove devils out of men's bodies, enabled the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, fed multitudes with a small supply, raised the dead, in order to teach that He had come to deliver men's souls from the power of the devil, to heal the spiritually deaf and dumb, to feed starving souls, etc.

Let us see how all this works out in the Gospel before us.

The Blind See.

1. The blind. *2. They see.*

1.

A. An example of physical blindness. V. 35.

This blind man an object of pity. Thrown on the charity of his fellow-men. Would any one voluntarily change places with him? What a sad state to be unable to see the beauties of nature, the dear faces of loved ones; to live in the dark; to be more or less out of touch with humanity; to face the uncertainty of the way ahead; to live in constant dread of dangers that, not being seen, cannot be guarded against; to have to depend on others for leading, for sustenance, for life; to feel that one is a burden to others; and to spend dreary hours in wondering why all this must be, — what a fate! How sad to realize, in addition, that there is no prospect of relief and that life will mean less and less as the years go on! However bravely

a blind man may appear to meet the world and attempt to carry on, however contented he may say he is, he is never envied, he is pitied. — But there is something much worse than physical blindness.

B. Spiritual blindness.

1. What is spiritual blindness? — It has nothing to do with the eyes of the body. Man may have good eyes and yet be inwardly blind. Nor is it chiefly an affection of the mind. There have been, and are to-day, people endowed with normal, even keen and brilliant, minds who are spiritually blind.

Spiritual blindness is the inability to see, understand, and grasp spiritual facts and truths. Spiritual truths and facts are such as tell us about God's real being and character, His disposition toward mankind, the way of redemption of all mankind which He has revealed to mankind, His methods of winning and converting the sinner, His government of and in the Church, His dealings in the final Judgment, His gift of eternal life. All things having to do with the saving God, with His Kingdom of Grace on earth, with His Kingdom of Glory hereafter, with all that He is doing for the welfare of man's soul here and hereafter, are spiritual things. These things are contained in the Word of God, are revealed particularly in the saving Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Not to know these things or, knowing them, not to understand and accept them, is spiritual blindness.

2. Man is spiritually blind. — Paul says: "The natural man," etc. 1 Cor. 2, 14. St. John: "The light shineth," etc. John 1, 5. Paul again: "Having the understanding darkened," etc. Eph. 4, 18. This condition is caused by sin and continues as long as man is still dominated by sin. In this state, man knows nothing about the saving God, nothing of His will and plan to redeem the world, nothing of the Savior and of the salvation through faith in Him, nothing of faith, conversion, sanctification, eternal life. Even though the Gospel offers him all the treasures of the Kingdom of Grace on earth and of the realm of glory in heaven, he cannot understand what it is all about, nor can he of his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him. Left to himself, he will forever grope in darkness.

That is a pitiable state. The spiritually blind cannot delight themselves with the beauties of God or the glories of His kingdom; they have no comfort, no peace, no help, no hope; they have the habit of trusting leaders as blind as themselves, of falling into every trap and pit, and they are headed straight for that eternal chasm of darkness and doom from which there is no rescue.

3. The disciples an example of this condition. — This is true at least to a certain degree. Their great Prophet had taught them for more than two years, and they had been with Him almost continually

during that time. And yet, now that He clearly revealed to them the real nature of His mission and the manner in which He intended to accomplish it, what was their reaction? Vv. 31—34. A remarkable statement. Clearly He foresees what the end will be, and in detail He tells His disciples about it. But they cannot see, they are as blind inwardly as was the poor beggar by the roadside physically.

The situation has its counterpart in the world to-day. In fact, we are by nature wholly blind to a proper understanding of the Gospel of the redemption through the suffering and death of Jesus. And if to-day we see the grace of God and have come to spiritual light through it, the merit is not ours; it is the gift of God which has given us true sight.

But possibly some of you are still wholly or partially blind. What do you really know about the mercy of God, about the divine plan of redemption? How do you view the events that occurred on Calvary? Etc. If at this moment you come to a realization of your blindness, do not be indifferent about it, for that would only make the latter state worse than the first. Neither, however, despair, for there is help for the blind.

2.

A. The Helper and Healer.

1. Who is He? — There was one who was equal to the situation in which the blind man of Jericho was, however hopeless it seemed to be. Jesus alone could help blind Bartimaeus, and the latter seemed to realize that, hence his insistent cry.

Jesus is the real Helper, with whom nothing is impossible. He is the God-man, who, though appearing in the form of a servant and on His way to experience His deepest humiliation, possesses all power in heaven and on earth.

Does that mean anything to us to-day? It does indeed. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever." To-day, risen from the dead, reigning for our benefit, He is more than ever "mighty to help in time of need." It is He alone who can, and He who actually does, relieve the distresses of His people, who dispels spiritual darkness and fills human hearts with the light of truth and hope. Even as without Him there is no light, hope, life, so, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He is still "the Light of the world." Nor does He wait until we come to Him; He comes seeking and saving.

2. He takes the initiative. — If He did not, we could never find the way to Him. He came to Jericho to heal blind Bartimaeus. He kept the teachings of His truth constantly before His disciples. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," He says. How comforting to know to-day of this trait of His. In mercy He regards the afflictions of His people and comes to their rescue; graciously also

He enlightens darkened hearts, for, "Lo, I am with you alway," etc., He assures us.

B. His help and healing.

1. How are they secured? — The blind man hears and cries: In one way or another he had learned that Jesus performed wonders of help and healing. He believed that what he had heard was true. Could he hope ever to come into actual contact with this Heaven-sent Physician? Whether he had hoped for it or not, the great opportunity had now come, Jesus was passing by. Passing by? Does He not see; will He not stop? "Jesus, Thou Son of David," etc. It was the cry of anguish, and out of it rang an appeal of simple, trusting faith. The crier will not be hushed. It was now or never.

A blind beggar must teach us the way. Let us attune our ears to the sound of the Word. Out of it comes the information about the Healer and His power and will to help. From it streams the light that dispels the darkness from our eyes. Through it also we gain the necessary faith and inspiration to bring our wants to Jesus and to appeal to Him for the help we need.

How slow we are to call on Him! If the disciples had only done as blind Bartimaeus did, they, too, would have received the power to see and understand what was still so dark to them, and the coming bitter hours of doubt and despair would have been spared them. Lord, teach us to pray for seeing eyes and for the light of truth.

2. Will Jesus really help? — He heard the blind man's cry. It was sweet music in His ears. To strengthen the beggar's faith and for the benefit of those who stood by, He caused the blind man once more to express his request. Confidently it came, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." The next moment the wish was granted. A simple word enabled the eyes of the blind to see.

It was the same Lord who in a similar manner helped the disciples to see when later, at His death, their hearts were left without hope. Risen from the dead, He came to them, and His words, confirmed by His visible presence, brought back to their hearts spiritual sight and joy. Also, having had their own eyes opened to the wonders of divine grace in the crucified Savior, they now could, and soon did, go out into the world to be light-bearers to others and to help deliver the world out of darkness and doom through the preaching of the Word.

The cry of faith never reaches deaf ears, is never in vain. The more diligently a Christian prays, the stronger grows his conviction that his prayers are heard, and the more glorious are his experiences of help received. — "Ye have not because ye ask not."

True, Jesus at times lets us wait in order to teach us patience, to test our faith and strengthen it. But His will and power to save never fail. Let us but hear, accept, and trust His Word. This

Word not only comforts and sustains us in our temporal adversities, but it particularly cures our spiritual blindness. Those who use it receive their sight.

C. The effect of the cure upon those who have received it.

1. V. 43. The gratitude of Bartimaeus was a touching sight. Mark its elements — it draws him at once into closer contact with Jesus ("followed Him"); it causes him to give thanks to God and to his Benefactor; it moves him to tell others what Jesus did for him. Also from the fact that the man's name is given — very likely for the purpose of identifying him to the later Christians who knew him — it appears that he remained not only physically, but also spiritually seeing and became a devoted and faithful Christian.

Similarly, when the disciples later received their full spiritual sight, their gratitude and praise rang out into the world, their joy and confidence were unwavering, and they spent the remainder of their lives showing forth before men the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The cross of Jesus, which at first so sorely perplexed them, was now their supreme glory.

2. That should and will be the reaction of similar experiences among Christian people to-day. The Lord has given you spiritual sight through the Gospel and has shown you the light of your salvation in His suffering and death on the cross. He hears your prayers and sends you comfort and help in every time of need. This must draw you more closely to your Savior and increase your interest in His Word; it must cause you to live a life of gratitude and praise; it must move you to make known to such as do not yet know and enjoy the light of salvation and help in Jesus Christ the great things awaiting all those who call upon the Savior and come to Him.

What an instructive, comforting story, this, of the blind who receive their sight, and what an interesting connection between the miracle that gives sight to the physically blind and the power of divine Gospel truth, which enables sinners to see the light showing them the way to heaven!

Let us all join Bartimaeus in his trustful appeal, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me. Lord, that I may receive my sight." And even while we are yet calling there already comes to us the comforting, sight-giving answer of Him who maketh the blind to see, "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee."

Illustrations.

Behold blind Samson! Helpless, blind, doomed. All he could do at last was to pull down the house upon his enemies. To-day blind sinners can come to Jesus, receive their sight, liberty, and life, and help raise the temple of salvation for those who are still sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Paul had enjoyed physical sight, but had been soul-blind. At his conversion he was stricken physically blind that he might bend his mind on spiritual light and receive soul sight. Then he was given back his sight in order that he might go out and bring saving sight to sinners everywhere.

A man lost his sight, but in this adversity found his Savior. One day a friend expressed his sympathy to him. But the blind man said: "Do not pity me; I am fortunate. If I still had my eyesight, I might be blind yet. Now that I have become blind, I have learned to see. Taking away my physical sight, God taught the eyes of my soul to see. I could never see Jesus before, and I was not interested in Him. But I see Him now, and I am much happier to-day than I was before I became blind." Later an operation restored this man's sight. He said: "May God protect and keep me, so that the things these eyes now see may never again lead me away from the light my inward sight beholds!" KARL KRETZSCHMAR.

First Sunday in Lent, Invocavit.

Matt. 4, 1—11.

One of the outstanding problems of the human race to-day is the problem of temptation. It is as old as Paradise and as new as this very hour; for Satan, the tempter, is ever at work.

It is a most perplexing problem. On the one hand, we see marvelous progress, complete change in the ways of human beings, and in the world's methods during the last hundred years. The invention of the telephone, the telegraph, the flying machine, the automobile, the many uses of electricity, the discovery of radio, etc., have well-nigh annihiliated time, space, and gravitation. On the other hand, there has been no moral progress in man. He has remained the same. No invention or discovery known to science whereby man, the indivdiual, may be morally improved. Indeed, modern inventions are often abused and pressed into the service of evil. The problem of temptation has become increasingly difficult in recent years.

It is a serious problem. The wave of crime and immorality that has been sweeping over our country, yea, over the entire world, the utter disregard for law and order, the appalling indifference toward all things spiritual and eternal, the shocking exposures of gigantic frauds, the untold misery and suffering in many homes, the increasing number of divorces and triangle entanglements, all point to the power and sway of temptation in our days and to the seriousness of the problem.

It is everybody's problem, whether he be in the wilderness, in the country, or in the city, in the Church or out of the Church. No

Christian can afford to dream that he is safe or immune. On the contrary, the more consistent and conscientious he is, the more frequently will he become the target of the devil's temptations, and the more earnestly will he have to battle against them for his own welfare and that of his fellow-men.

It is a hopeless problem without Christ; but with Christ and through Christ is can be solved in a victorious way.

Well, may we, therfore, on the basis of our text, ponder to-day over the temptations of the devil and how to conquer them.

Victory over the Temptations of the Devil.

1. The nature and methods of temptation;
2. How to gain the victory over them.

1.

A) Christ, our divine Savior and Master, according to our Gospel-lesson, is led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; He is to be subjected to the severest temptations. Three temptations are recorded in our text, though there were undoubtedly many more in the wilderness; many also throughout the life of Jesus and finally in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross; each one was a real temptation. There are times that try men's souls. These were the times that tried the very soul of God Himself in Christ Jesus. God's eternal plan for the salvation of the world was to be carried out. Christ was to save the world by His vicarious suffering and death. All the evil that has been brought into this world by the Tempter with man's consent and cooperation, all the punishment in time and eternity that man deserved was to be suffered by the promised Savior, Christ Jesus. The head of the serpent was to be crushed and his grip on mankind released forever. These temptations of Jesus by the devil were a part of His work as our divine Substitute. As such, He was to overcome the Tempter for us. How important that we dwell upon this saving work of Jesus during the Lenten season!

B) However, Christ is also our model, and from this viewpoint we would consider His temptations in the wilderness to-day. In each temptation of Christ the cunning manner of the Tempter is pictured by the holy writer. The Tempter knew how Jesus longed for the salvation of the world and how eagerly and earnestly He was to seek and to save that which was lost, how willing to pay the supreme sacrifice upon the cross. To frustrate this plan of Jesus in a sly and treacherous way was the object of the devil's temptations.

a) V. 2—3. Jesus hungry after the fast of forty days. Hunger naturally diminishes one's resistance, both physically and mentally. This temptation of the devil, a temptation to doubt the providence of

God and His support and to let selfishness rule rather than the spirit of self-sacrifice.

b) Vv. 5. 6. Temptation in the Holy City, on the pinnacle of the Temple of God. No place too sacred for the Tempter. In this temptation, Satan tried to plant the seed of self-glorification and presumption in the heart of Jesus. He uses the Word of God to deceive Jesus to false application of Holy Writ. The Tempter knew how eager Jesus was to gain followers and here would seemingly offer Him an opportunity for a spectacular exhibition of His powers and thus for gaining many followers.

c) Vv. 8. 9. Once more the Tempter attacks; there is no ceasing in his efforts to destroy God's works. "A stratagem of magic the devil here employs to conjure up the wealth and the glories of the earth." This temptation was absurdly foolish and naively blunt, but the devil stakes all upon it. He tempts Jesus to gross idolatry, to adopt evil means for the accomplishment of a desirable end. Nothing could have pleased the Jews more than a Jesus who would give unto them the entire world, who would fulfil their carnal expectations from the Messiah by giving them the wealth and power and glory of this present world. Jesus was well aware of the false Messianic hope of most Jews, and this to Him, who was walking about in great humility and poverty, was indeed another serious temptation.

C) From these temptations of Jesus we are to learn the nature and the methods of Satan's temptations. Luther rightly describes them as "deep guile and great might." In his wily way the Tempter in general seeks to blind man against the real nature of sin. In this way he tempts all people, believers as well as unbelievers. The Bible tells us that sin is the transgression of the Law of God, that it separates man from God, is evil, wicked, brings upon man God's curse for time and eternity, that it is something to be avoided, shunned, and hated, and that the only solution for the problem of sin is sincere repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. The Tempter, however, pictures sin as something beautiful, something to be desired and worth having and necessary to life, as happiness and progress. Thus the holiest powers of man are prostituted to the vilest purposes. Sin is softened and silvered by the glozing language in which it is spoken of. Cursing becomes strong language; adultery, fornication, and high-life, an experience in living; fraud, a clever act; gluttony, the love of good things; hatred, injustice, murder, savagery, deviltry, "the prosecution of Nature's plan for the advancement of the inhabitants of the earth to higher and nobler forms of living." Thus the Tempter seeks to conceal the hideous nature of sin by beautifying it. He will excuse or even justify it, or picture it as something very small and insignificant and of little or no consequence. (Thus he tempted Judas at first to steal only a few pieces of money.)

D) In various and special ways, however, the devil tempts the believers in Jesus. The three temptations referred to are repeated by the devil in the life of believers, not once, but frequently.

a) In times of need, of special trials, and of sorrow the devil tempts believers to doubt God's providence and support. He will say: How can you be a child of God? Does not your need, your sorrow, etc., clearly show that God is not interested in you? Ask Him and see if He will help you, etc.

b) Again the Tempter seeks to lead the believer to a false faith by misquoting the Bible — various denominations, cults, etc.

c) Finally he tempts believers to great sins, to unbelief, vice, and shame for the gratification of the flesh, for worldly ambitions, etc. Many have succumbed (David, Peter, Judas). "Let him that standeth take heed," etc.

Well might we despair if we had to face the Tempter alone and if victory depended upon us, for "with might of ours can naught be done," etc.

2.

A) Jesus, our Lord and Savior, shows us how to obtain the victory in the manifold temptations of the devil.

a) When the devil tempted Him to doubt the providence of God and therefore to prove that He was God's Son by making bread out of stones, Jesus said: "It is written," etc. V. 4.

b) When the devil tempted Him to self-glorification and presumption and falsely quoted a portion of Holy Writ, Jesus again used the Word of God and said: "It is written," etc. V. 7.

c) And when finally the devil tempted Him to gross idolatry, Jesus again used the Word of God and replied: "It is written," etc. Verse 10.

d) Thus, in every temptation Jesus used the Word of God against the temptations of the devil. "It is written," that was the weapon with which He conquered.

B) So we, too, should use God's holy Word in order to conquer.

a) When tempted to doubt God's providence and love in time of need, let us cling to such words of God as these: Acts 14, 22; Heb. 12, 7; 13, 5; Matt. 6, 33; Ps. 23, 1.

b) When tempted to a false belief and presumption, let us cling firmly to the clear Word of God and not suffer ourselves to be misled by the Tempter, even when he disguises his temptations by a passage from Scripture. — *E. g.,* Baptism, Holy Communion, salvation by grace, etc. (Catechism and proof texts.)

c) When tempted to gross idolatry, to vice and shame, let us face the Tempter with the powerful passages of Holy Writ which denounce and condemn these sins in words so clear and emphatic that even a child can understand them. Is. 42, 8; Eph. 5, 5; Heb. 13, 4; Eph. 4, 28; 5, 25, etc.

C) If we thus follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and use His Word as a weapon against the Tempter, we can be assured of victory, of vanquishing the foe, and of the assistance of God's holy angels.

Onward, then, ye Christian soldiers! Watch and pray lest ye fall into temptation. Diligently hear and study the Word of God, and in every temptation fight with our Lord and Savior, using the Word of God. Then ye shall triumph over the devil, yea, over the hosts of hell, in life and in death and finally in all eternity reap the blessed fruits of your victory over the Tempter. HENRY KOWERT.

Second Sunday in Lent, Reminiscere.

Matt. 15, 21—28.

The greatest victories are not won on the battle-fields, on the ocean, or in the air, but in the heart of man. They are the victories over sin and the manifold temptations and trials of this present life. These victories are so important because of the eternal issues involved and also on account of the great power of those against whom these victories must be won.

Only true believers can win these greatest of all victories. Without true faith in Christ the human soul is lost; but every soul that truly believes, can and does win these great victories.

The victories of faith may be divided into three classes: the victories over the devil, as we heard last Sunday, over the obstacles placed in our path by man, and over the trials sent by God Himself. Our text for to-day treats of the victories over man and over the trials sent by God. Hence our theme: —

The Victories of Faith over Human Obstacles and in Trials Sent by God.

1. The victory of faith over human obstacles.

"A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto Jesus," etc. V. 22. A woman of Canaan, a woman from a heathen country, who had been brought up as a heathen, lived in a heathen home, amid heathen surroundings, under heathen prejudices against the Jewish nation and its religion. Her people could never forget that the Jewish people had taken possession of their land (cf. the Indians in our country). Century-old national and home prejudices, transplanted, as it were, from generation to generation, had to be overcome. Before going to Jesus with the prayer to cure her daughter, she must have thought: What will my countrymen and my neighbors say if I go to this Jesus of the Jewish nation and request His assistance? Will they not ridicule me? Will they not make me suffer for

this step? Will they not perhaps even disown me? All these prejudices and misgivings and fears had to be overcome.

Thus we are reminded of all the prejudices and misgivings against Jesus even to-day throughout the world. In the heathen mission-fields, what a towering mass of prejudices opposes the Gospel! All that the natives have heard from infancy restrains them from coming to Christ. How many people in our own land and city take offense at the preaching of Christ Crucified and ridicule it before others! This religion of salvation by grace is diametrically opposed to their whole conception of how to gain the favor of the Divine Being. They consider it foolish. This in itself presents many obstacles. How almost imperceptibly the opinions and practises of our neighbors and fellow-men often hedge us in! Friendships, family ties, business connections, the lodge, intellectual, scientific, political, and social activities, are only too often barriers and merciless prison walls for souls that should be on the way to Christ.

However, not only unbelievers, but even believers place barriers and obstacles in the way of those who should be gained for Christ. We read of the disciples in our text that, when the woman of Canaan persistently implored Jesus to help her daughter, they said to Jesus: "Send her away, for she crieth after us." They intercede for her, but their tone is not gracious. It implies that they would gladly be rid of her, that her persistent crying was annoying them. By their very tone they presented a real obstacle to this woman of Canaan. It is by inconsistent living, by doing those things that are wrong, by indulging in the forbidden pleasure of this world, etc., that even Christians often present real obstacles.

Finally obstacles are presented by our own flesh, the Old Adam.

But all these obstacles are overcome by faith. This we see clearly in the example of the woman of Canaan. How was it that she overcame all these obstacles? Because of faith, real, living, genuine faith, in her heart. Faith overcomes all these prejudices; for it is a power of God, wrought by God, stronger than all obstacles. Looking at the obstacles of her fellow-men and her nation, the woman feels: And if I should lose all, I *must* go to Jesus, for He alone can save my daughter. Looking at herself, she realizes her own sinfulness and unworthiness and cries for mercy: "Lord, have mercy upon me."

So to-day. In heathen countries, in our own country, when, under the pressure of physical or spiritual need, faith enters the heart, then all scruples are cast aside, then the wall of prejudices is broken down, and all obstacles are conquered. Every barrier is removed, one is ready to break with everything and everybody in order to join the company of Christ's disciples, because *He* is in their midst. What seemed impossible the power of faith has obtained, and faith boldly exclaims: Rom. 8, 31b.

However, in addition to the victory of faith over man and all obstacles presented by man, it also wins a victory over God Himself, so to speak, *viz.,* in the trials to which God often submits Christians in order to strengthen their faith.

2. Victory in the trials sent by God.

The woman of Canaan sets forth upon her search and does not rest until she has found Christ. There, however, she experiences something wholly unexpected. Christ, He from whom alone she expected help and salvation, appears to give no ear to her plea. Oh, what a severe test this must have been for her young faith! However, she persists, cries after Christ, pursues Him, overtakes Him, casts herself before Him, and brings Him to a halt.

Such is the power of faith. Energy engendered by the Spirit. Even to-day faith often passes through similar experiences. Christ does not seem to care, but faith proves its strength and power and clings to Jesus, casts aside all shyness, runs after God, halts Him, then cries out of the depth of the heart: "Lord, help me." Is there greater power? A man can plant himself in the way of another and importune him until his request has been granted; an army can halt the advances of another; a people may impede the progress of another or one group of another; but who can stay the power of the Almighty? Faith can do this.

But faith can accomplish even more. The woman lay before Jesus and barred His way, but her real battle had just begun. For now fell from Christ's lips the hard, the terrible word that classed the kneeling woman with the dogs. Luther: "Nowhere in the gospels is Christ painted as being so hard as here."

But the faith of the woman was equal to this attack. The eyes of faith see light where others see only Egyptian darkness. As Luther writes: "There is more yes than no in Christ's speech. Yea, nothing but yes, but very deep and hidden, and it seems to be nothing but no." There was not an absolute denial of her request, there was still room for argument.

With her "yet" she fully acknowledges the justice of this terrible sentence, but still lying in the dust with her "yet," she wins her way to Jesus' heart, disarms and wholly overcomes Him, so that He cannot but grant her prayer; and she clings to His every word. This is the highest attainment of faith; here faith is divinely heroic and conquers by firmly clinging to the Word of God.

Can faith still accomplish this? To-day as then faith is engendered by the Spirit, equipped with power, destined to wrestle with God, and to win the victory. The situation is still the same. In our day also God often seems to pass by the believer, and when he overtakes Him and confronts Him, he meets with no immediate assistance, but is repulsed. Oh, well for us if then our faith is skilful in

wrestling with God, if in deep contrition it says "yea and amen" to His hard sentence and unreservedly submits to it and yet does not let Him pass on, but, kneeling before Him and gazing up into His face, cries out with assurance: "Yet, though I am a lost and condemned creature, I have been purchased and won by Christ with His holy, innocent suffering and death, and for His sake I belong to Thee. Thou wilt not cast me off." In trials and tests of faith we are at all times to cling firmly to the Word of God and through this faith in God's Word obtain the victory. 32, 26b (Jacob). "From God shall naught divide me," etc. (Hymn 509.) "My faith is built on nothing less," etc. (Hymn 306.) HENRY KOWERT.

Third Sunday in Lent, Oculi.

Luke 11, 14—28.

(According to outline by W. C. K. in *Hom. Mag.*, Vol. 29, p. 86.)

"Be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Pet. 3, 15. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men," says Christ, "him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Luk 12, 8. 9. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him shall also the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father and with the holy angels." Mark 8, 38. In these and many other words the Bible encourages and exhorts all Christians to bear testimony for Christ, cheerfully and courageously to confess Him at all times.

This is indeed a very difficult duty. Christians often hesitate to testify or all too frequently neglect this duty. At times they may even feel ashamed to testify. Not so the apostles. Acts 4, 20. Not so Luther before the Diet at Worms. It is through such witness that souls are to be won for Christ or strengthened in their faith, etc.

Christ Jesus is presented to us in our text as a model in bearing testimony before various classes of people. Three distinct classes are introduced in our text: the avowed enemies of Christ, who blaspheme Him; those who waver and hesitate to declare themselves for Christ; and also a certain class of admirers. Let us therefore, by the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, ponder over —

Christ in His Masterly Defense and Testimony, a Model for All Servants of Jesus.

1. In His reply to the blasphemers;
2. In His reply to those who waver;
3. In His reply to certain admirers.

1.

A) Christ silences His enemies.

a) After Christ had performed several remarkable miracles, the Pharisees began to blaspheme Him in a public and vicious way. Not only did they despise His miracles, but they also ventured to blaspheme Him in the following words: v. 15.

b) Christ, who is heavenly Wisdom itself, defends Himself in a masterly way. In vv. 17. 18 He exposes the blasphemy as wilful, satanic malice; in v. 19 He attacks them in their own camp and shows that they admire and praise in their own children the very thing for which they condemn Him. (Luther, XI, 554.) In v. 20 He reveals to them the true state of affairs. In vv. 21. 22 He illustrates His arguments with an example that is easily understood and cannot be contradicted.

B) The servants of Jesus should learn from Him to defend themselves against those who blaspheme Christ and His Word to-day.

a) Wherever the Word of God is preached and its power is felt, opposition is inevitable. The enemies of Christ will say, for instance: "Christians are just as wicked and as evil as the children of this world; the Bible is a book of fables, an invention of the clergy; Christ is a mere man and nothing more; Christians are not loyal citizens, and in their Christian day-schools the children are taught to be disloyal," and so forth.

b) What are we Christians to say in answer to such accusations? Are we to remain silent? Are we to think that all replies to such insinuations and blasphemies will be futile and out of place? Are we to say nothing? By no means. From the example of Christ in our text we learn to bear witness. We are to follow this example and expose the folly of these accusations. We are to show that they despise and denounce in us what they praise in themselves and what the true state of affairs really is in our circles, according to the Word of God. (Consider, for example, the blasphemy in regard to our Christian day-schools. What is taught in our schools relative to love and loyalty to our Government? Obedience to our Government. Exactly what the Bible teaches. Concerning the civil government we teach: Rom. 13, 1. 2. 4; concerning the duty of praying for the government: 1 Tim. 2, 1—3; concerning loyalty and obedience to the government: Titus 3, 1; 1 Pet. 2, 13. 14. How can anybody say that a person who is taught to regard his government as an institution of God, to pray for it, to obey it, is being taught to be disloyal and is estranged from his government? The very opposite is true, as Daniel Webster already remarked: "That which makes a man a good Christian makes him a good citizen.")

2.

A) In addition to the avowed enemies of Christ, who blasphemed Him, there were those who wavered. Concerning them we read in v. 16: "And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven." These people did not wish to be classed as enemies and blasphemers of Christ, nor did they wish to be considered followers of Christ; they preferred to remain more or less neutral. They wanted to be friends of both, Jesus and His enemies. To these Jesus addresses Himself in the words of our text: "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." He makes it plain to His hearers that there can be no neutral ground and that they cannot be with Him and with His enemies at the same time, that they must be either for Him or against Him.

B) There are many to-day who belong to this class, who are wavering; they do not blaspheme Christ and His Word, they lead outwardly righteous lives, but do not wish to declare themselves for Christ and to be known as His followers. They would belong to the Church and to the world, to the lodges and other worldly, sinful societies; they would enjoy themselves with the world in its lusts and with the Church in its social activities, etc. Time and again they declare their highest regard for the Church, but in their heart of hearts they are really enemies of Christ and of His kingdom. This very fact Christians are to declare unto them according to John 17, 14; Jas. 4, 4; Rom. 12, 7. Sin is to be called by its proper name and stamped as such, and it should be clearly shown that it involves enmity against God. "Faith is the substance [the assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction] of things not seen." Heb. 11, 1; 13, 9. Faith does not insist upon signs or miracles, but trusts the Word of God entirely. Matt. 8, 8. Faith abandons all things contrary to God's holy Word. 2 Cor. 6, 14 ff. In matters of faith there can be no happy medium, no neutral ground. (*What the Lutheran Church Stands For,* its doctrines and its Scriptural stand toward questions of the day, should be dwelt upon here.) We must insist with Elijah in regard to all those who waver: 1 Kings 18, 21.

3.

A) The miracles and powerful words of Jesus made a deep impression on many. The people admired Christ. A woman, overcome with enthusiasm, praised highly the woman who had been privileged to be the mother of such a wonderful son and called her blessed. V. 27. Christ, however, answered her (v. 28): "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

B) To-day, too, there are many people who are filled with emotion and enthusiasm when they hear the precious truths of the Gospel. Luke 2, 18. They express their sentiment in words like these: "That certainly was a beautiful sermon!" What are the servants of Jesus

to answer in such cases? They are to follow their Master and to show that mere admiration is not enough, but that all depends on believing the Word of God (Luke 2, 19; John 3, 16) and bringing forth fruits of righteousness. Whoever receives the Word of God in truth will bring forth fruits unto righteousness and be saved.

God grant that we all learn from our Savior the art of ready reply, of cheerful and courageous testimony at all times and on all occasions; and may He bless the testimony that we bear under the gracious guidance of His Holy Spirit to the glory of His name and the salvation of many souls!

Stand up, stand up, for Jesus!

HENRY KOWERT.

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Laetare.

John 6, 1—15.

The charge is often raised against the Church that it is concerned too much about eternity and not enough about the present time, too much about the other world and not enough about this present world, too eager to bring people to heaven and not eager enough to bring heaven to the people on earth; that it overemphasizes the soul and neglects the body; that the religion of Christ pays too little attention to the needs of the body, the earthly temporal wants; in short, that Christ does not satisfy man's real and foremost needs on earth, etc.

What about these charges? Unfounded, false. The religion of Christ not indifferent to man's physical well-being on earth. It puts first things first; hence the emphasis on the soul, etc. It makes possible a well-balanced life and character. Christ Jesus the Savior of body and soul; faith helps man also physically and temporally (in sickness, for real success in life, etc.). Doctrine regarding resurrection of the body. Godliness profitable. 1 Tim. 4, 8. By preaching "otherworldliness," eternity, judgment, etc., Church improves conditions on earth. The man who lives with eternity, with Judgment Day, in mind will for this very reason lead a different, a better life than if he did not believe this.

That Christ, our divine Savior, is interested also in our earthly wants is clearly shown in the Gospel-lesson for to-day.

Three Truths Strikingly Set Forth in Our Gospel-Lesson.

1. How dependent we are upon Him. 2. How He provides for us. 3. How firm our trust in Him should be.

1.

A) Dependence of all people upon Jesus also for their earthly wants. "A great multitude followed Him into the mountain." Desert country. No facilities for provision there. Had not sufficient amount

of provisions on hand. Multitude helpless. V. 5. Question by Christ to Philip to test faith, to show how dependent upon Him. Reply by Philip and statement by Andrew show how helpless they all were, how dependent upon Christ.

B) All people in the world to-day dependent upon God for "everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body." God would "lead all people to know" this. Hence often permits special trials, special needs; in spite of man's best calculations and special endeavors often forced to see how utterly helpless and that entirely dependent upon God. Like multitude in lesson for to-day. Other examples: Israel in the desert, Deut. 8; Elijah, the widow, 1 Kings 17; seven "lean" years in Egypt at time of Joseph.

Man's utter helplessness and dependence upon God not recognized by most people. Even scoff at the very idea. Ridicule the thought of praying for daily bread. To them the support of the body a question of work and wages, of man's own ingenuity, skill, experience, etc. An example from daily life, however, will show how dependent all people really are upon God. If a loaf of wheat bread costs 10 cents, how much does the wheat in the loaf actually cost? The wheat, which is the staff of life, how much are you paying for it? In answering this question, you will allow a certain amount for the farmer, who tills the soil and sows and harvests the wheat; a certain amount for the miller, who grinds the wheat into flour; a certain amount for the baker, who bakes the bread. But how much do you allow for the wheat itself? What is the cost of the wheat? Not one cent. The wheat is a gift of God, a free and unmerited gift of God, from the third day of creation until now. All the people in the world cannot make a single grain of wheat. Before that little grain of wheat with its germ of life and strength all the science and wisdom and experience and wealth of mankind stand baffled and helpless, unable to reproduce or manufacture one single grain. Nor can the people make the soil in which the wheat grows, the sunshine, the rain, and a proper combination of the two to make the wheat grow. Without God and His free gift of wheat and the other necessities of life all the people in the world would starve to death. How dependent, therefore, all people in the world are upon God! How necessary for each and every one to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread"!

2.

In the second place, our Gospel-lesson for to-day shows how Christ provides for our earthly wants.

A) Providing for the great multitude no problem for Him. Omnipotent, omniscient. How He provides: —

a) People were seated in orderly fashion; Christ would not have one single person overlooked and uncared for.

b) Christ took the bread and the fishes on hand. Could have ordered manna from heaven again, but did not. Used results of man's labor.

c) Looked toward heaven and thanked God, then blessed and multiplied by His omnipotence the bread in such a wonderful way that there was ample provision for all, yea, more than enough. Twelve baskets of fragments.

B) So to-day. Christ provides also for the physical needs of mankind. Acts 17, 27. 28. Ps. 145, 15. 16. Not by performing a miracle before our eyes like in the feeding of the five thousand, but ordinarily through man's work and the Lord's blessing upon it. Gen. 3, 19; 2 Thess. 3, 10; Ps. 182, 2. In the case of infants and sick people, also orphans, aged, infirm, etc., the Lord provides through other people. Heb. 13, 16; 1 John 3, 17. 18. However, Christ is able to provide also in miraculous ways, because He is ever the same in power. As Luther states, the annual crops are miracles of Christ, who multiplies the seed that is sown.

3.

How firm our trust in Christ should be.

A) Trust and confidence in Christ easy in days of prosperity, but in days of need and trials often very difficult. Often tempted to say with Philip: v. 7, or with Andrew: v. 9. "What are they among so many?" Five loaves among five thousand people. When he should have remembered the love and power of Jesus to help, he failed utterly.

B) This question of a little faith often repeated in our lives. Five among five thousand! In days of sickness, unemployment, special trials, etc. In these days of need and trials we should remember Christ, our Lord and Savior. His love for us that brought Him into this world to live among sinful men, to save man by fulfilling the Law of God and suffering and dying as man's Substitute is a guarantee of His constant interest in us and His eagerness and willingness to help at all times. Rom. 8, 31. 32.

He has provided for our earthly wants in times past. Luke 22, 35; Gen. 32, 10.

He provides for all creatures, surely also for man, for you. Ps. 145, 15. 16; Matt. 6, 25 ff.; 10, 29. 30.

He provides even for the unjust, the evil; how much more for those who through faith are children of God! Fourth Petition: What does this mean? Matt. 5, 45.

He has promised His care and support. 1 Pet. 5, 7.

How firm, therefore, should our trust and confidence in Him be at all times. Ps. 37, 5.

How cheerfully we should also show our trust in Him by serving Him with our earthly possessions (gathering the fragments) and liberally contribute toward the upbuilding of His kingdom and for the welfare of our fellow-men in general.

"Cheer up, my heart, rejoice and sing," etc. Hymn No. 292, stanzas 13 ff. HENRY KOWERT.

Fifth Sunday in Lent, Judica.

John 8, 46—59.

Is Christianity a fact, or is it a fable? Is it a revelation of God or an invention of man? Is it a success or a failure? Must a person really believe according to the Bible that the only way to be saved is by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, that faith alone can save and that unbelief condemns?

There are many who claim that Christianity is nothing but a fable, an invention of man, and a failure. They denounce and reject faith as something that is absolutely impossible and absurd.

This should not surprise us. A man who has never been in Europe may deny that there is such a country, but people who have been there or have read about Europe know better. A poor man may claim that there is not a million dollars in this world; the millionaire will smile at him.

Likewise, people who are outside of the pale of Christianity may deride and denounce it; but the believer, who basks in the sunshine of God's grace and love, can only pity them. The more seriously a Christian ponders over unbelief, its essence and its results, in the light of God's Word, the more will he be strengthened in his own faith.

To-day's text suggests such a study of unbelief. Christ Himself gives us the theme in the words: —

"Why Do Ye Not Believe in Me?"

Let us see —

1. That unbelief seems to be self-evident;
2. That, however, it is strange and terrible;
3. What the real reasons for it are.

1.

A) From the viewpoint of the natural man, or the unbeliever, unbelief seems self-evident. Jesus makes assertions concerning Himself which to the reason of natural man seem impossible and preposterous. Three of His assertions in our text are of this nature. The first one appears to natural man as doubtful and impossible, the second as a lie, the third as a blasphemy.

a) "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" By this statement Jesus put Himself into a class entirely by Himself. Throughout His public ministry He endeavored to prove that all people are sinful and in need of a Savior. In this connection He declared that those to whom He was addressing Himself in these words, though members of God's chosen people, were not of God. V. 47. They regarded this as an impossibility and firmly believed Him to be possessed by a demon.

b) To their consternation, Jesus proceeds with the more monstrous statement: "If a man keep My Word, he shall never see death."

They argued: Is not this statement of Jesus contrary to the experience of the greatest and best men, such as Abraham and the prophets, who believed, according to Jesus' own statement. Did they not die? What a lie, then, this statement of Jesus' must be! How could any sane person be expected to believe it?

c) The climax, however, of arrogance and stupidity on the part of Jesus seemed to come when He referred to the joy of Abraham over seeing the day of Christ (by faith in the promise of the Savior) and then concluded: "Before Abraham was, I am." In these words Christ claims to be eternal, true God from all eternity. This appeared to them as blasphemy and according to their law deserved nothing less than stoning. The sooner such a man would be put out of the way, the better. To believe in Him, to accept Him as the Messiah, seemed to them to be an incomprehensible act of folly and sacrilege. Nothing could be more self-evident than to reject Him, nothing more in place than absolutely not to believe His words.

B) Thus it is even to-day. To natural man, who is cognizant only of the visible world, the religion of Jesus, which points him also to the invisible world and treats that as a reality, seems absurd.

a) That in the firmly established history of mankind there should have been one, only one, who was sinless, is contrary to all natural experience.

b) That Jesus should have performed deeds contrary to the laws of nature seems like denying the inviolability of all laws of nature.

c) To believe that He overcame death and that belief in Him will help all to overcome death, this enemy, would surely mean to close one's eyes to the most terrible of all realities, death.

d) That Jesus should have existed before Abraham, should be eternal, in a class with God Himself, — how preposterous!

e) And to declare that faith in His cross, where His impotence was revealed, should save the sinner — surely absurd. The sooner men cease to believe such nonsense, the sooner the influence of Christ would be removed from the hearts and minds of men, the better.

f) And then to declare that all who do not believe in Him are not of God seems to be an intolerable insolence, which must be exterminated. In the words of George Tyrrell: "The old God must be pulverized before the new can reveal Himself to us." (Quoted favorably by H. R. L. Shepard in his book *The Impatience of a Parson.*) Thus they think and speak.

C) And how about yourself, my dear fellow-Christian? Have you never in your heart heard this voice of natural reason, especially when the demands of Jesus seemed irksome and interfered with your desires? Then you, too, found unbelief to be quite reasonable indeed. But you did not stop there, or you would have broken with Christ and all that is Christian. Very soon it became clear to you, *i. e.*, through the guidance of God's Spirit.

2.

However, it is really strange and terrible not to believe in Christ.

A) Was it not strange, passing strange, that the Jews refused to believe in Christ?

They knew the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Savior and every word and act of Jesus was a fulfilment of these prophecies. Why did they not believe in Him? Why did they harden their hearts?

B) Is it not strange that men should refuse to-day to believe in Christ? Should not the fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning Christ up to this day be convincing to every one? (Refer especially to His death on the cross, His resurrection, and the history of His Church.)

a) Is it not strange that any one who has experienced the power of sin in his own life and in the world about him and also his own utter helplessness as well as that of other people over against sin should refuse Christ, who offers the only solution for the problem of sin?

b) Is it not strange that the promise of Christ regarding death is rejected by so many? Fear of death is universal. Vain are all the attempts to beautify it, to forget it, to ignore it. It often comes when life is richest and most promising. Should not man lend a willing ear when Jesus approaches him and says: "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death"? Is it not strange for a man to declare this assertion of Jesus foolish and false in spite of the testimony of the large number of believers throughout the ages who through Christ overcame death and all its terrors: Simeon (Luke 2, 29. 30), etc. (The maid of Voltaire declared, after witnessing his terrible death, that she would never again be a nurse for an unbeliever.)

c) Is it not strange that man, living in this world of temporal and transitory things, suffering from constant change and decay, should

refuse Him who comes out of eternity and leads into eternity, who is human and therefore knows how man suffers amid sin and mortality, but who is also divine and immeasurably transcends mere mortal man, who can reach into life, lay hold on it, support man, lead him, and save him for time and eternity? Man's refusal to believe in Christ is strange and absurd. It is even more.

C) It is terrible. — a) For what does the man who refuses to believe the Bible really do? He declares that the Bible is not what it claims to be, namely, the Word of God and eternal truth; that it is not true what God reveals in the Bible for man's salvation; that it is in reality a lie and a falsehood, an imposition, a blasphemy; for it can be only one or the other, true or false. The unbeliever, in effect, calls God Himself a liar. Is not this terrible?

b) Unbelief is terrible also in its results. It offers man no solution for sin, gives him no hope, no peace, no joy, and subjects him to God's punishment in time and in all eternity.

3.

Let us finally ponder over the cause of unbelief as revealed by Jesus in our text.

A) The Jews would not believe in Jesus because He spoke the truth and they were given to falsehood, vv. 46—55, and were children of the devil. Hard words, but they were spoken by Him who is the Truth. Christ sees deeper than they. It was their worldly-mindedness, their love and admiration of self, their unwillingness to place themselves fully under the Law and to learn their sinful condition; it was because they refused to admit that they were lost and condemned sinners, in need of grace and forgiveness from the Savior, that caused their unbelief. Their will was bound by Satan, and in his way they would continue.

B) So to-day the religion of Christ is not contrary to reason, but far above it; as long as the need of a Savior is not recognized by man, the religion of Jesus will be rejected and denounced; the power and sway of Satan over the hearts and minds and wills of men to-day.

C) But when man, through the saving work of the Holy Spirit, learns to know from the Law of God the nature and results of sin, his own personal need of a Savior, and the saving power of Jesus, he will rejoice over Jesus, believe in Him, and cling to Him and say: John 6, 68. 69. May, then, unbelief never seem self-evident to us, but always strange and terrible, and may the Savior never say to us: "Why do ye not believe in Me?" May our prayer be: 9, 24 and Luke 17, 5, till we join St. Paul: 2 Tim. 1, 12. Amen. Henry Kowert.

Palm Sunday.

(Confirmation Address.)

Matt. 26, 41.

You are well aware, my dear young friends, of the importance and the solemnity of this occasion. For the greater part of a year you and I have been making preparations for it. Together we have studied the fundamental doctrines of the Holy Scriptures in order that you, who in your infancy were added to the Church of Jesus Christ by Holy Baptism, might now be fully equipped to receive the benefits of the other Sacrament, the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor. 11, 28. In the course of your studies you have become better acquainted with our adorable Savior and, I hope, have learned to love Him more fervently. And now you have appeared in the presence of God and His congregation to make confession of your faith and to vow allegiance to your Redeemer and King.

I am convinced that you are sincere in your professions. You love Jesus. You are eager to serve Him. You are determined to remain faithful to Him. Nothing is farther removed from your mind than the thought that you might possibly deny the Lord that bought you. On the contrary, you are ready to exclaim with Peter: Matt. 26, 35.

But "let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." 1 Kings 20, 11. Cp. 1 Cor. 10, 12. Do not forget that you are just entering the conflict. The path of righteousness, on which you have set your feet, leads through a barren and perilous wilderness, infested with vicious foes and dotted with many bloody battle-grounds. And the bones that lie bleaching along the way proclaim the melancholy fact that not all who started, finished their course successfully. No; many, too many, who once kneeled at Christian altars — also at ours — have fallen away from Jesus and perished.

In view of this appalling fact I feel constrained to speak a few words of solemn warning to you now. This I have chosen to do on the basis of the Lord's own charge to His disciples: —

"Watch and Pray."

1. "Watch!"

A) *The charge.* Jesus makes it the duty of every disciple to watch. *Gregoreo,* to be wide awake, on the alert, on one's guard, cautious. Cf. Matt. 24, 43; 25, 13; Mark 13, 34; 1 Pet. 5, 8. This command is given in the face of imminent danger. Illustration: An army about to be attacked by the enemy.

B) *The reason for this charge.* "Lest ye enter into temptation." *Peirasmos* is a trial, a testing or proving. Here, an experience by

which the very existence of faith is jeopardized, a snare and a trap laid by Satan, the world, and our flesh. These three powerful and crafty enemies conspire against the soul of every true disciple, and Jesus knows that, unless the disciple is ever on his guard, he will become their victim.

1) Take the case of the Eleven. Jesus knew that their faith would within a few days be subjected to an acid test. Mark 14, 27 ff.; Luke 22, 31; John 16, 20; Luke 22, 40. Prompted by love, He revealed this to them and instructed them to watch and to be cautious. But His warning was not heeded. The disastrous results of their carelessness can be seen most clearly in the case of Peter. He entered into temptation, that is, instead of avoiding the snare which Satan had laid for him, he walked right into it and then denied the Lord who had tried, and was still trying, to save him. Luke 22, 54—62.

2) Also your path is beset with manifold temptations, cunning devices of Satan, 2 Cor. 2, 11, by which he would estrange you from Jesus and rob you of your salvation. 1 Pet. 5, 8. Do you desire to know what these temptations are? You will find them accurately described in your Bible. We mention only a few of the most dangerous. a) False doctrine, Matt. 7, 15; 13, 21 f.; Rom. 16, 17; 1 Tim. 4, 1 ff. Men will tell you that the teachings of the Bible are antiquated, that science and philosophy have proved the Holy Scriptures to be in error. They will ridicule the doctrines of creation, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the atonement, heaven and hell, the bodily resurrection, and life everlasting. And they will do this with an air of superior wisdom and sanctity, appearing, like Satan himself, as angels of light. A fiery ordeal, indeed, for the faith of a reflective and progressive youth. b) "The cares, riches, and pleasures of this life." Luke 8, 14. Cp. 1 John 2, 16. The average man is ensnared more easily by these than by false doctrine. There are the cares, the worries, for those who are growing old; the riches with their deceitfulness for those in the prime of life; and the pleasures of this life, the youthful lusts, 2 Tim. 2, 22, for the young. Thus Satan provides temptation for all. Mark well, for all. Also for *you*. At this very moment he has his snare laid for you. And pray, what may this snare be? I cannot tell, but since you are young, I suspect that it is included in the Savior's term "the pleasures of this life." Experience teaches that at the present time more young people perish through their indulgence in youthful lusts than for any other reason. Vile books, motion pictures, dance halls, drinking parties, evil friends, and the like, are being used by the arch-fiend with wonderful success in his campaign against the youth of the Church. Yes, there is good reason for the Savior's admonition: "Watch, lest ye enter into temptation," for we are living in the age described 2 Tim. 3 and 4.

C) *The manner in which this charge is to be carried out.*

1) The Savior says: "Watch lest ye enter into temptation." As a Christian, you should therefore be on your guard continually. Never be satisfied to do things because you see others do them, but first convince yourself that these things are good and not snares of the evil one. The moment you recognize a temptation, flee from it as you would from Satan himself, even though you be ridiculed for it. Be especially cautious about your besetting sins, those sins to which you are most easily tempted and in which you find most pleasure. In short, be wide awake and on your guard and dare to be singular. Illustration: Joseph, Gen. 39, 7 ff. — Prov. 4, 23. 25 f.; 1 Thess. 5, 4; Heb. 2, 1; 1 Pet. 5, 8.

2) But how can you determine what is a temptation of Satan and what is an invitation to a legitimate pleasure? There is such a difference of opinion nowadays. Answer: By the Word of God. Ps. 119, 9. 11. 105. Our vision is so defective and our judgment so warped that we, left to our own resources, often find it difficult to distinguish good from evil. Our watchfulness will, therefore, profit us little unless it be based on the Word of God. Hence *Luther:* "This is the right kind of watching, watching in God's Word, with which we can repulse the devil and his fiery darts, obtain the victory and refrain from sin." (VIII, 1216.) "One of the requisites of watchfulness is that a person at all times, and with earnestness, study, sing, recite and read the Word of God." (VIII, 1217.) This means that you must read the Bible regularly and also attend our services if your vigilance is to produce the desired results. Ps. 91, 4.

But the Savior gives us another charge: —

2. "Pray!"

A) *The charge.* The believer should pray, *i. e.,* he should call upon God for wisdom, guidance, protection and deliverance. He should do that at all times, 1 Thess. 5, 17, but especially in the day of trouble and temptation. Phil. 4, 6; Jas. 5, 16; Ps. 145, 18; Luke 21, 36.

B) *The reason for this charge.* "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Peter found this out. Cp. Matt. 26, 35. 69 ff. Paul found it out. Rom. 7, 15—25. And you will find it out, too. Our intentions, especially on occasions like this, are good. We form high resolves and dedicate ourselves to Jesus for time and eternity. And then, when we least expect it, we fall into sin. Yes, "the flesh is weak." And if we in our combat with temptations depend upon ourselves, we shall fail, and that in spite of the most painstaking vigilance on our part. For what good will it do us to recognize a temptation if we do not have the power to overcome it? But Jesus says that we may obtain the necessary power from Him if we but ask for it. Matt. 7, 7; 1 John 5, 14 f. No man has ever yet been overcome by a temptation while he lay on his knees in true and fervent

prayer; for true prayer always brings the strengthening angel to our side. Hence the words of Jesus: "Pray *lest* ye enter into temptation." Luke 22, 46. The person who neglects his prayers has no right to expect that he will be able to overcome temptations.

C) *The manner in which this charge is to be carried out.*

1) The true child of God will not venture to get along without prayer even for a short time, for he knows that his flesh is weak. Distrusting himself, but trusting Jesus to the uttermost, he will daily come to Jesus for encouragement, counsel, protection, strength, and help. Ps. 55, 22. And especially when the temptations become alluring and fascinating and he realizes that his will-power is breaking down, will he turn to the Friend of his soul with the heart-felt prayer: Hymn 409, 1. 2. Rising up from his knees, he will be a stronger and more consecrated Christian, because, with the help of Jesus, he gained the victory over the Tempter. Jas. 1, 12.

2) Accordingly, I beseech you, my young friends, to resolve to-day that you will make your lives genuine lives of prayer. Do not postpone this, but begin to-day. Remember the words of Jesus: "The flesh is weak," for in these words you have a powerful argument for the necessity of prayer in your lives.

Conclusion. — God grant that these words may not have been spoken to you in vain, but that you may from this day to the end of your lives "watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Then will your salvation be secure. Jude 24. 25. E. J. FRIEDRICH.

Easter Sunday.

Mark 16, 1—8.

In the gray dawn we behold the first Easter congregation proceeding to its place of worship. Not a happy throng hastening to the Temple, but a handful of disconsolate women, bound for Joseph's sepulcher. They come to pay "the last offices of tenderness and devotion" to the body of their Lord. They are heart-broken, bewildered, terrified. When Jesus died, their faith was blasted, and their hope perished. Luke 24, 21 portrays their sad plight.

But their love for Him lives and urges them on to His tomb. They become alarmed when they perceive that it has been opened. Entering, they are filled with consternation, because the body of Jesus is not there. Was it stolen? John 20, 2.

Behold, then, the evangelists' picture of the first Easter congregation in its sanctuary: A few Galilean women, in deep mourning, trembling in the darkness of the sepulcher, prostrated by grief, perplexed, their hearts throbbing with fear, their hopes shattered, their spirits utterly crushed. Standing there in the gloomy haunt of death,

with their faces bowed down to the earth, — what a commentary on 1 Cor. 15, 19!

To this congregation God sends the first Easter preacher. Not a man with unclean lips, however, but, as at the Nativity, a holy angel, "a true ev-angel-ist" (Maclaren). His appearance, v. 5; Matt. 28, 3. Cf. Ez. 1, 14; Heb. 1, 7. In heavenly accents he delivers his message. Vv. 6—8.

This message effected a complete transformation in the women. Their sorrow was turned into joy. Matt. 28, 8. Having gone forth with weeping, they could now return with rejoicing. Ps. 126, 5. 6.

Thank God, this message was delivered for us also. And it is just as powerful and life-giving to-day as it was then. Let us, therefore, give it our prayerful attention that we may "obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Is. 35, 10.

The Angel's Easter-Message.

It contains —

1. A joyful announcement; 2. A solemn charge; 3. A comforting promise.

1.

A) *The Easter tidings.*

1) Having assured the women that there is no reason for fear, the angel delivers his announcement in short, majestic utterances: "Jesus ye seek, the Nazarene, the Crucified. He arose. He is not here." V. 6. Mark the tone of triumph. — He begins with a reference to the death of Jesus. "The angel is not ashamed of the cross, because in it is the salvation of men." (Theophylact.) But, like Paul, Rom. 8, 34, he emphasizes the resurrection, because without it the crucifixion would be a grim, unfruitful tragedy. — The substance of the message is contained in a single word, *"egerthe."* He is risen. Our eternal destinies are concentrated in it. "He arose," *i. e.,* by His own power, John 2, 19. 20; 10, 18. Death could not hold Him, Acts 2, 24; for He is the Resurrection and the Life. John 11, 25. He emerged from the conflict as victor. Rev. 1, 18. Hence, the prophecies are fulfilled. Ps. 16, 10 (Acts 2, 31); Matt. 12, 40; 16, 21; John 2, 19.

2) "He is risen." This joyful message has come down through the centuries. It is the only genuine Easter-message to-day. As a messenger of the Lord, I bring it to you also.

B) *How to receive these tidings.*

1) The angel takes for granted that the women will believe his words. Although they have not seen the risen Lord, they are to be so certain of the resurrection that they can confidently announce it to others. V. 7. Their faith is not to rest on personal observation or external evidence, but on the word they heard. John 20, 29; Heb.

11, 1; Mark 16, 14. The women did not disappoint him. They believed.

2) Faith in the Word is the chief requirement in a Christian, especially also on Easter Day. Reason declares the resurrection impossible. The world ridicules it. Many nominal Christians regard it as a pious myth. Shall we doubt it? No; we will follow the example of the women and believe the Easter-gospel in spite of the fact that we have not yet seen the risen Lord. Mark 9, 24.

3) But in another respect these women are to be an example of warning. The angel indicates that they should have believed the promises of Jesus concerning His resurrection. Matt. 28, 6, Luke 24, 6. 7. In the face of His promises it was foolish for them to seek the living among the dead. Luke 24, 5. 25. Had they believed the Lord's promises, the angel's announcement would have been superfluous. The empty tomb would have proclaimed the resurrection to them. This is of importance for us, for the Easter-message contains not only the announcement of Christ's resurrection, but also promises for the future. Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 20 ff.; John 6, 40; 11, 25; 1 Cor. 6, 14; 2 Cor. 4, 14. What the Lord has promised us should be just as real and certain to us as if we already possessed it and saw it with the bodily eye.

4) Consider, moreover, that all their sorrow, perplexity, and fears resulted from their failure to believe the promises of Jesus. In reality there was no reason for alarm. God was working out His great plan before their eyes, and if they had believed, they would have been confident even from Good Friday to Easter morning. Their sorrow was due, not to the fact that Jesus lay dead (for He had already risen), but to their unbelief. Unbelief and doubt always result in misery. Example: Thomas, John 20, 25. But in believing there is joy. Rom. 15, 13. O the mass of needless grief in our lives, grief born out of our own unbelief and doubts!

C) *The fruit of faith in these tidings.*

1) As soon as the women were convinced of the truth of the angel's message, "they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and *great joy.*" "Fear at the greatness of the miracle; joy because of their desire for Him that was risen." (Jerome.) Why did they rejoice? Not merely because their Friend was being returned to them, but also because they now had conclusive evidence of His deity, John 20, 28, and a guarantee that all His promises would be fulfilled.

2) If we believe, the Easter-message will kindle an abiding joy also in our hearts, for "Christ's resurrection gives us a certified Christianity, an accredited salvation." (Hallock.) Now we know: a) That we worship a living Lord and not a dead prophet. Compare Christ and Mohammed. Hymn 229; b) That Christ is God. John 20, 28; Rom. 1, 4; c) That He is our successful and sufficient

Savior, Rom. 4, 25; Col. 2, 15; Rev. 1, 17. 18; d) That His teachings are the truth, 1 Cor. 15, 14—18; e) That He will be our Guide, Guardian, and Helper in time of need, Matt. 28, 20; Ps. 23; f) That He has received our loved ones who have fallen asleep in His name unto Himself, 1 Cor. 15, 18; John 14, 3; g) That He will raise up our dead bodies, John 11, 25. 26; 14, 19; 1 Cor. 15, 20; 1 Thess. 4, 16; Phil. 3, 21; h) That He will give us eternal life, John 11, 25. 26; 14, 19; 17, 24; 10, 28; 1 John 2, 25. Thus the Easter-gospel equips us for every emergency. Hence we rejoice and praise God. 1 Pet. 1, 3—6.

2.

A) *"Go! Tell!"* V. 7. — This is the solemn charge given by the angel to the believing women. They should not linger at the sepulcher, for the body of their Lord was no longer therein. Neither should they make a shrine of it. They should at once become active as missionaries of the risen Christ by proclaiming His resurrection. The women obeyed, Matt. 28, 8. Picture the joyful eagerness with which they related their experiences, Acts 4, 20. "When many share a joy, each has a richer measure of joy, because they kindle themselves and are inflamed by one another." (Augustine.)

B) *To whom should they tell it?* — First to those who needed the message most, the disciples. V. 7. Jesus repeats this direction, Matt. 28, 10; John 20, 17. The disciples were like sheep not having a shepherd, sorrow-stricken, terrified, hopeless. No doubt their conscience accused and condemned them. They were, therefore, in dire need of the glad Easter-tidings. — The angel mentions Peter in particular, for among the Eleven he had sinned against the Lord most grievously. "If the angel had not named Peter, he would not have dared to come among the disciples. He is called, therefore, by name that he might not despair." (Gregory.) What a commentary on the Savior's love and the scope of the Gospel!

C) *The charge, v. 7, expanded.* Forty days later the angel's charge was enlarged to include "all nations." Matt. 28, 18—20. Christ rose for all. All should, therefore, hear the joyful message. The apostles were always mindful of this. Acts 4, 33; 26, 22. 23. The resurrection was the staple article of their preaching.

D) *Our obligation.* We, too, should spread the glad tidings of the resurrection. It is our duty; rather, our privilege. Let us also "run and tell." Let us tell it to the contrite, who are distressed because of their sins, that they may be comforted; to the cross-bearers, that their burdens may be lightened; to the doubters, because this alone can bring certainty into their hearts; to the unbelievers, because it furnishes the most powerful proof for the divine origin of our religion. In short, let us proclaim it to all that all may be saved. Our own joy and peace will increase in the measure in which we do this. Cf. 2, A.

3.

A) The angel adds a comforting promise. V. 7b. The women should not only know that the Lord had risen, they should also see Him in Galilee. Refers to the promise Mark 14, 28. It is noteworthy that they actually saw Him that same day on the way to Jerusalem, Matt. 28, 9. Jesus not only fulfils His promises, but usually gives more than He promised.

B) We have received a similar, but *far more glorious promise.* We have never seen the Lord, for He has gone to prepare a place for us. John 14, 1—6. Yet we often yearn to see Him. John 12, 21. And we shall see Him face to face, as He is. 1 Cor. 13, 12; 1 John 3, 2; Ps. 17, 15. We shall behold Him with our bodily eyes. Job 19, 25. Where? In heaven. When? Perhaps sooner than we think. Let us, then, love Him whom we have not seen, 1 Pet. 1, 8, and look for His glorious appearing. Tit. 2, 13.

Conclusion. — This, then, is the angel's Easter-message, the glad tidings that have rung down the corridors of time, bringing joy, peace, and salvation to millions of agonizing souls. Brief recapitulation. Let us accept it with believing hearts, thank and praise God for it, propagate it among our fellow-men, and confidently look forward to the day when we shall awake in the likeness of the Lord and forever see Him as He is. Rom. 15, 13. E. J. FRIEDRICH.

NOTE. — With a few changes, part one may be used as a complete sermon outline.

First Sunday after Easter, Quasimodogeniti.

John 20, 19—31.

The sun of the first Easter Day had set, and the Eleven, along with several other disciples, were assembled in a room at Jerusalem. The doors had been locked for fear of the Jews.

The events of the last three days had left the disciples in painful mental and spiritual turmoil. "They were full of conflicting emotions, disappointment, perplexity, and fear. We here behold them shyly and sadly hid away, like frightened deer, timid, and hardly willing to speak to any one or to believe anything." (Seiss.) True, certain women had reported that the Lord had risen, but "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." Luke 24, 10 f. Neither did they believe the report of Cleopas and the other disciple. Luke 24, 33—35; Mark 16, 13. Thus they presented a pitiful spectacle: their faith had perished, they were being tormented by an accusing conscience and, in addition, they were cowed by the prospect of an early persecution by the Jews.

Suddenly, while the Emmaus disciples were still reciting their

experiences, Jesus Himself came and stood in their midst. But instead of comforting and gladdening them, His appearance filled them with consternation and fear; for they did not recognize Him, but thought they saw a spirit. Luke 24, 36 f.

Jesus, however, allays their fears with the salutation: "Peace be unto you." Coming from His lips, this was not a perfunctory greeting, but "a solemn, uncommon benediction, conferring upon them all the blessed fruits and effects of His death and resurrection." (Matthew Henry.) In short, these words conveyed to them the supreme Easter-gift of their risen Lord.

Since these precious words have to-day come also to us, and since they, by the grace of God, convey to us the selfsame gift which the disciples received from their risen Lord, let us now consider: —

Our Risen Lord's Easter-Gift to the World.

1. Wherein does this precious Easter-gift consist?

A) Jesus says: "*Peace* be unto you." V. 19. As the Prince of Peace, Is. 9, 6; John 14, 27; Eph. 2, 14, He imparts that serene and heavenly peace which was hailed by the prophets, extolled by the psalmists, magnified by angels at His birth, and guaranteed by Himself before His Passion; that peace for which every human heart yearns, consciously or unconsciously, but to which the world never attained. This peace, in all its fulness, is the Lord's Easter-gift.

B) The peace which Jesus gives is a *spiritual* peace, for He Himself announced that He had not come to bring temporal peace. Matt. 10, 34 ff.; Luke 12, 49 ff. It is twofold.

1) Essentially and fundamentally it is "peace *with* God," the peace which we have in regard to God. Rom. 5, 1. Since the Fall the wrath and curse of God rested upon man. Rom. 1, 18. A hopeless situation. Eph. 2, 12. But the risen Christ appeared with "the Gospel of peace." Eph. 6, 15. He proclaimed that God had changed His attitude toward man and is now at peace with him. Rom. 5, 10; 2 Cor. 5, 19. The divine wrath is removed, all sins are forgiven, the portals of hell are closed. Objective justification. Thus the Lord's gift is the very heart of the Gospel. Illustration: Its value for the disciples, who, especially in view of their recent unfaithfulness, had ample reason to dread the wrath of God. (Hymn 261, 1.) — *Bunyan:* "One day as I was traveling into the country and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, . . . that Scripture came to my mind: Col. 1, 20. By which I was made to see, again and again, that day that God and my soul were friends by His blood; yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other through this blood." (*Grace Abounding,* § 116.)

2) But it is also "the peace *of* God," Phil. 4, 7; Col. 3, 15, that peace of conscience and tranquillity of the soul which results from

the conviction that there is peace with God; "inward peace, the state of soul of that believer who, having entered into peace with God through faith in Christ, has also committed to God through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving all his anxieties, Luke 7, 50; Phil. 4, 6." (*Scofield Ref. Bible.*) The Lord does not want us to be "troubled." Luke 24, 38; Matt. 11, 28. With His Father's proclamation of peace He stills the tempest in our hearts. Illustration: Mark 4, 39. *Luther:* "The peace of God is the gift of peace from God." (XII, 1107.) "A restless conscience cannot be calmed in any other way than by the peace of God." (VIII, 1374.)

a) This peace of God is a *supernatural* peace, Phil. 4, 7, a fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5, 22, a miracle. The world cannot understand it, for it thrives in trouble and blossoms forth in all its loveliness in the dismal valley of death. Ps. 23, 4; Luke 2, 29. *Luther:* "This is the true peace which satisfies the heart and calms it; and not in seasons when there is no trouble, but in the very midst of trouble, when outwardly there is nothing but unrest. And this is the difference between temporal and spiritual peace: temporal peace consists in this, that the outward trouble, which makes us restless, is removed. . . . But the Christian, or spiritual, peace reverses the matter: outwardly the trouble remains, . . . but inwardly there is peace, strength, and consolation in the heart, so that the heart is not worried about any trouble; yes, it is more courageous and joyful when there is trouble than when there is none." (XI, 728.) *F. W. Robertson:* "The Redeemer says: 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' The world proposes a rest by the removal of a burden. The Redeemer gives rest by giving us the Spirit and the power to bear the burden. Matt. 11, 28 f." Illustration: Gen. 22, 7. 8. The peace of some afflicted soul to whom you have ministered.

b) Note that the Scriptures speak of this peace as a *positive gift.* John 14, 27. It is "not only the negative absence of pain, but the positive presence of a tranquilizing guest within your heart." (Maclaren, *Manchester Sermons,* I, 227.) Many an infidel thinks that he has peace because he is "able to live without the daily sense and sting of sin"; but he deceives himself. What he has is not peace, but a deadened conscience, the cold vacuum of spiritual death. Illustration: "As the old historian says about the Roman armies that marched through a country, burning and destroying every living thing, 'They make a solitude, and they call it peace.' And so men do with their consciences. They stifle them, sear them, forcible silence them, somehow or other; and then, when there is a dead stillness in the heart, . . . they say it is peace." (Maclaren.) Contrast with this the peace that Jesus gives: a blessed reality, a radiant resident of the heart. Illustration: The angel in the sepulcher. Mark 16, 5.

2. But how was this peace created and perfected for us?

A) Jesus indicates this by exhibiting His hands, feet, and side. V. 20. Luke 24, 39. These "five wounds most holy," representatives of His entire suffering and death, bear eloquent testimony to the fierceness of the conflict through which He passed for the sake of our peace. Is. 53; Luke 22, 39—46; Matt. 27, 46. It required the death of the Son of God to establish peace with God. 1 Pet. 2, 24; Titus 2, 14; Matt. 20, 28. With the words "It is finished" our Substitute announced that the great atonement was completed, that God was again at peace with man. And so "He is our peace" and "the Lord of Peace," Eph. 2, 14; 2 Thess. 3, 16; for in Him "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," Col. 1, 14. Cf. Is. 32, 2. 17.

B) This peace, which Jesus earned on the cross, was sealed and promulgated by the Father when He raised His Son from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is the great seal of God affixed to the atonement, the majestic "Amen" of the Father to the "It is finished" of the Son, the solemn absolution pronounced by God upon the entire human race, a universal proclamation of peace. Rom. 4, 25. (Cf. Walther, *Ev.-Post.*, 160 ff.) "When God raised Christ from the dead, He declared, by the act of raising Him, that the sins of all men had been perfectly atoned for by His death and that all men were therefore to be adjudged righteous before the divine tribunal." (Pieper, *Dogmatik*, II, 380.) Without the resurrection of Christ we could have no peace, even though He had died for us. After all, it was the *risen* Lord who brought the peace of God to the disciples. This fact was emphasized by His appearance in His resurrection body. Vv. 19. 26; Luke 24, 31. *Luther:* "Where the resurrection of Christ is, there must be consolation, joy, and a clear conscience, because death, sin, and divine wrath cannot be present there." (XIII, 522.) Illustration: v. 20 b.

C) Bear in mind that no sinner, no matter how black his record, is excluded from this peace. Christ died *for all.* John 1, 29; 1 John 2, 2; Heb. 2, 9; 2 Cor. 5, 14. 19. And *for all* the Father raised Him from the dead. Heb. 13, 20. Hence the peace which Jesus brings belongs to *all.* Cf. Is. 57, 19.

3. How is this heavenly peace, which by virtue of Christ's death and resurrection belongs to all men, brought into the human heart?

A) By the *Gospel.* Jesus said to His disciples: "Peace be unto you." With these words He presented all the fruits of His glorious triumph to them; "for Christ does not speak words, but things." (Stoeckhardt.) This is one of the supernatural characteristics of the Gospel that it at once bestows the gifts which it announces. Hence it is not merely a joyful message or a comforting benediction from the lips of Jesus, but the actual vehicle of the fruits of His

death and resurrection. John 6, 63; Rom. 1, 16; 1 Cor. 1, 18. Illustration: The Gospel is the Savior's hand with which He presents His gifts to us. — It should be stressed that the Gospel is the *only* medium through which Christ communicates His peace to us. In no other way, neither by dreams and visions nor by introspection and meditation, by mystical communion with the unseen, through some mysterious, undefined influence, or by morality and good works can the peace of God be shed abroad in the human heart. It comes either through the Gospel or not at all. Hence the expression "the Gospel of peace." Eph. 6, 15. *Luther:* "You cannot find peace, joy, and salvation anywhere but in the Word of God." (XII, 1953.) "We must be on our guard against the sects, who despise the external Word and Sacraments and expect God to speak to them in their hearts." (XIII, 2321.) "No man should undertake to deal with God excepting through His Word or to build himself a private road to heaven." (V, 281.) Cf., *e. g.,* William Law, the English mystic: "Every man has an open gate to God in his soul. . . . No son of Adam is without a Savior or can be lost but by turning away from the Savior within him." But what does Jesus say John 10, 1—7?

B) Through *faith.* Rom. 5, 1; 15, 13. It is not enough for Christ to communicate His peace to man through the Gospel; man must also accept it. This is done by faith. John 1, 12. 16; Acts 10, 43; 26, 18. As long as a man refuses to believe the Gospel of peace, he will be without peace. Illustration: Thomas, v. 25. Unbelief is the only sin that shuts out the peace of God from the human heart. This explains why Jesus did not say a word about all other sins of the disciples, but reproved them because of their unbelief and hardness of heart. Mark 16, 14. — But the moment the sinner believes, the Holy Spirit enters his heart, and, as one of the fruits of the Spirit, there will be peace, Gal. 5, 22, great peace, Ps. 119, 165, a peace that passeth all understanding. Phil. 4, 7. Then will he understand the words of Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee." Illustration: Thomas, v. 29.

C) Thus the peace of God is bestowed upon the sinner through the Gospel and received by faith. You have the Gospel; but have you faith? Christ says also to you: "Peace be unto you"; but does this peace "rule in your hearts"? Col. 3, 15. An important question. Hence: 2 Cor. 13, 5.

4. The great commission and responsibility with which the Lord invests every man who has the peace of God in His heart.

A) Every great spiritual blessing is accompanied by a proportionate responsibility. So here. If the peace of God has been shed abroad in your heart, you are to be a messenger of peace to others. The risen Lord emphasizes that the peace which He has brought,

belongs to the world, and not only to the disciples, and forthwith makes arrangements to have this peace conveyed to all men. Vv. 21. 23. Not only the apostles, but also the other believers, Luke 24, 33, were commissioned to propagate this peace on earth by forgiving the sins of penitent sinners in the name of Christ. A blessed privilege. Is. 52, 7; 2 Cor. 5, 20. A tremendous responsibility. "This," says Luther, "is the first and foremost work of love a believer should perform after his conversion." (XI, 730.)

B) But, you say, how can I, a poor sinner, do this? Ah, beloved, no man is sufficient of himself to discharge this high responsibility. Therefore Jesus equips His messengers with the Holy Spirit. V. 22. *Stoeckhardt:* "The Holy Spirit now appears as the Spirit of Christ, the gift of the risen Lord. Christ has finished His work on earth, the work of redemption, and has Himself been perfected. Now His Spirit is to convey the finished salvation to mankind and to appropriate it to them. The disciples of Jesus are the ones who have been chosen to bring the Gospel of peace to the world. But they do this in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lends power and emphasis to the Word, so that it penetrates into the hearts of men and wins them for Christ." (*Hom. Mag.*, XXI, 103.) Illustration: The power of the apostles' testimony. Acts 2. Why, then, are we so timid and faint-hearted as messengers of peace? We have the same Gospel and the selfsame Spirit. Therefore: Is. 40, 9.

Conclusion. — Recapitulation. We have again heard the voice of the true and only Prince of Peace. Again He has bestowed His peace upon us, the fruit of His death and resurrection. Let us with believing hearts accept this precious gift. Then the peace of God will rule in our hearts, Col. 3, 15, keeping us in perfect peace, Is. 26, 3; Phil. 4, 7, and making us competent to publish this peace among men, Is. 52, 7, until that glorious day shall appear when we shall forever be taken away from all evil and enter into that perfect and everlasting peace in the bosom of our Beloved.

E. J. Friedrich.

Second Sunday after Easter, Misericordias Domini.

John 10, 11—16.

"Christianity may be a good thing for the dying, but it offers little or nothing for the living." A common opinion. Since Christianity deals in "things not seen," Heb. 11, 1, and continually admonishes us to fix our eyes on the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled reserved in heaven for you," 1 Pet. 1, 4, many leap to the conclusion that all real compensations of discipleship lie on the far side of the grave. This is one of the reasons why so many who are not openly hostile to Christianity continue to postpone their repentance — as a rule until it is too late.

But the experienced believer knows better. He knows that the choicest blessings and the purest pleasures of life are conferred upon him through his religion. When he considers what his life would be without these blessings and pleasures, he is constrained to say with the psalmist: Ps. 27, 13. Yes, Christianity makes life worth living. It supplies the one thing needful in all conditions and in every respect. In this dry and thirsty land it is "a well of living waters and streams from Lebanon." Cant. 4, 15. *Luther:* "The temporal life is a life only if it is lived in Christ and in the spirit of faith." (VIII, 1456.)

Among all the fruits of faith which the believer enjoys in this world none is more precious, or the source of greater joy and satisfaction, than his fellowship with Jesus, that intimate and sublime relationship existing between Christ and the believer. John 15, 4; 17, 23; 1 Cor. 1, 9; Gal. 2, 20; 1 John 1, 3; 2 John 9.

In our text this beautiful and inspiring relationship is portrayed with consummate skill by the great Master Artist Himself.

Let us now study the picture which He has painted for us in order that we may be led to a deeper appreciation of our relationship with our beloved Savior and that this blessed relationship may henceforth be cultivated more assiduously among us.

The Intimate and Sublime Relationship between Christ and the Believer.

It is set forth —

1. In the parable of the Good Shepherd;

2. By a still sublimer and more striking comparison.

1.

A) Jesus says: "I am the Good Shepherd," v. 11. "Now we shall not learn anything from that unless we enter humbly and affectionately into the spirit of Christ's teaching. It is the believing heart alone which can give us a key to His words. . . . A cold, clear intellect will make nothing of them. . . . In the dry and merciless logic of a commentary, trying laboriously to find out minute points of ingenious resemblance in which Christ is like a shepherd, the glory and the tenderness of this sentence are dried up." (F. W. Robertson, *Sermons,* p. 407.) Yes, the Savior here speaks to our hearts; and with open, believing, and loving hearts we must receive His message if it is not to be wasted upon us.

B) The title "the Good Shepherd" contains a wealth of comforting truth for the believer. "Good," not in the sense of benevolent and kind, but in the sense of genuine, of the real kind, true-born. St. Paul uses this word, *kalos,* 2 Tim. 2, 3, where he speaks of "a good soldier of Christ." Moreover, Christ does not say that he is merely *a* good shepherd, one among many, but *the* (definite article) Good

Shepherd, the Good Shepherd *par excellence.* He claims this as a title belonging to Himself alone. On the word "Shepherd" Luther says: "It is exceedingly comforting that He is here called a Shepherd; for in this one little word all the beautiful and comforting things that may be said about God have been concentrated. . . . This word has a cordial sound and immediately communicates to the godly, when they hear or read it, confidence, consolation, and security. . . . Therefore this image is one of the loveliest and most solacing in the Scriptures." (V, 261 f.) The early Christians dwelt with especial fondness on the image of the Good Shepherd. They used it on cups, ornaments, sarcophagi, and in the catacombs.

C) Now let us turn to the parable. We read: vv. 11—13. Even a casual reader will recognize in these words a wonderful description of the ideal relationship existing between Christ and the believer. But upon closer examination we find that this relationship is here viewed from three different angles and that *three of its most important characteristics are plainly exhibited.* We have here: —

1) *A relation grounded in love,* the everlasting love of Jesus, manifested, tested, tempered, and deepened by His supreme sacrifice.

a) Jesus says: v. 11. And He kept His word. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5, 8. He sacrificed Himself for us, just as a faithful shepherd at times sacrifices his life in an effort to rescue a wayward sheep; but with this difference: the shepherd loses his life by accident, while Jesus laid it down of Himself, v. 18, for no other reason than that He loved the sinner. Thus the death of Jesus was the *manifestation* of God's everlasting love to man. Rom. 5, 8; John 3, 16; 15, 13. — But more: When a shepherd is called upon to make a great sacrifice to save his sheep, his love for the sheep is put to a test. In a similar way, Christ's love for us was *tested* on the cross. John 15, 13. And it stood the test, for He remained faithful to us even unto death. "Having loved His own . . ., He loved them unto the end." John 13, 1. Now we know that His love is genuine and true and not the superficial love of the self-centered hireling; for it did what no other power in heaven or earth could do: it nailed the Son of God to the cross and laid Him in the grave. Hymn 99, 2. — But His love was also *tempered and deepened* in the ordeal of the Great Passion. True, the shepherd makes sacrifices for his sheep because he loves them. But, having made the sacrifices for them, he loves them all the more; for in his eyes they are not merely sheep, but represent all the toils, hardships, and sacrifices to which he subjected himself for their sake. So with Jesus. He died for us, because He loved us even in our sins, but having brought this great sacrifice for us, He loves us all the more. We are the fruits of His suffering and death. Is. 53, 11. — This everlasting love of Jesus, revealed in all its fulness on the cross and tested, tempered,

and deepened in the ordeal of the Great Passion, is the sole cause and the firm foundation of the relation existing between Christ and the believer.

b) Under normal conditions a genuine sacrifice deepens not only the love of the one who brings it, but also the love of the person for whose benefit it is brought. Yes, at times a sacrifice will even succeed in kindling love in a heart that hitherto has been altogether devoid of love. Illustration: A mother whose sacrifices win back a wayward son. This the death of Jesus did for us. By demonstrating His infinite love for us, it finally melted our icy hearts and kindled in them a sincere love for Him who died that we might live. 1 John 4, 19; Rom. 5, 5; 2 Cor. 5, 14a; 1 Pet. 1, 8. And thus we, too, entered into that sublime and intimate relationship with Jesus that was created through His sacrificial death.

2) *A relation of mutual ownership,* the ideal ownership of love.

a) The attitude of the shepherd toward the sheep differs from that of the hireling, because the shepherd owns the sheep. V. 12. This is true also of the Good Shepherd. He owns us, not simply because we are His creatures, Ps. 100, 3b, but, above all, because He has redeemed us with His blood and still embraces us with His holy love. Gal. 4, 5; Titus 2, 14; 1 Pet. 1, 14; Rev. 5, 9. A comforting truth. We are not our own, for we were bought with a price. 2 Cor. 7, 19 f. Surely our Good Shepherd will guard and defend those whom He has purchased with His own blood. John 10, 29; Mal. 3, 17; Ps. 17, 7 f.; 91, 10 f.; 121, 7 f.; Is. 42, 6. Hymn 276, 1.

b) But the reverse is true also: the sheep can claim the shepherd as its own. Since the sheep belongs to the shepherd, the shepherd belongs to the sheep. This is true especially in the fold of our Good Shepherd. "My Shepherd." Ps. 23, 1. Not, indeed, because we, the sheep of His pasture, did anything to bring Him into our possession, but because He gave Himself to us through the Gospel. Henceforth He belongs to us, and nothing in heaven or on earth or in hell can take Him away from us. Rom. 8, 32. 38 f. Hymn 97, 1. *Luther:* "True faith embraces the Son of God joyfully and with outstretched arms and says: This is my Beloved, and I am His." (XIX, 1439.) Thus the good Shepherd and His sheep live in an ideal and blissful relationship — by virtue of their mutual love they have full possession of one another. Hymn 501, 11. 12.

3) *A relation characterized by careful solicitude* on the part of the Shepherd *and care-free confidence* on the part of the sheep.

a) The shepherd differs from the hireling also in this, that he "careth" for the sheep. V. 13. This does not mean merely that he takes care of the sheep, for *melei* is to be translated with *to care about* or *to have regard for.* (Thayer.) The true oriental shepherd's consideration is not his own person, but his sheep; for he knows

their value, he has high regard for them. Ps. 23; Ezek. 34, 11 ff.; Luke 15, 3 ff. Illustrations: Jacob, Gen. 31, 40; David, 1 Sam. 17, 34—36. Cf. "The Song of Our Syrian Guest." (Knight.) Even so "our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," Heb. 13, 20, cares about us. Others may despise and ignore us; but He has placed a high estimate upon us, for He knows the value of an immortal soul purchased with His own blood. Hence He watches over us with careful solicitude. He guides us with His eye. Ps. 32, 8. (At this point give a short exposition of Ps. 23 for the purpose of illustrating the careful solicitude of the Good Shepherd.)

b) The attitude of the sheep over against the shepherd, on the other hand, is one of care-free confidence. The sheep instinctively relies upon the shepherd. We believers in Christ should do the same. Since we belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd, we know that we shall be well provided for, temporally as well as spiritually. Having a Shepherd, "I shall not want," "I will fear no evil," "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me." Hence, our hearts should be free from anxiety, worry, and fear. Ps. 40, 17; 55, 22; 127, 2; Matt. 6, 25—34. "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5, 7.

D) Thus Jesus in the parable of the Good Shepherd describes the intimate and sublime relationship existing between Him and the believer. Brief recapitulation of paragraph 1, C. But vv. 14. 15 reveal that Jesus had not exhausted His subject. Beautiful and appropriate though it is, the image of the Good Shepherd is not altogether adequate. In fact, the relationship between Christ and the believer is so unique, so mysterious and supernatural, so heavenly and divine, that it is impossible to find a satisfactory illustration on earth. Therefore Jesus ascends, as it were, into heaven and returns with a comparison that is sufficient in every respect.

2.

A) Jesus says: vv. 14. 15. Read: "I am the Good Shepherd; and I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father." Cf. Luther's translation.

B) Here we are face to face with an amazing comparison. The believer is highly exalted, and his relationship to Christ likened to that mysterious and ineffable communion between the Father and the Son. *Robertson:* "The affection between the divine Shepherd and His flock can be compared, for the closeness of its intimacy, with nothing but the affection between the eternal Father and the Son of His love. As the Father knows the Son, so does the Shepherd know the sheep; as the Son knows the Father, so do the sheep know their heavenly Shepherd." (*Sermons,* p. 404.) *Stoeckhardt:* "This communion of love between Christ and the believing Christians is as

intimate, strong, and firmly established as the eternal communion between the eternal Son and the eternal Father." (B. G., N. T., 174.) By all means read Luther, XI, 824 ff.

C) It is impossible for us to fathom the mysteries of the unique relationship between the eternal Father and the Son. But we may get at least a glimpse of its solemn grandeur and sublime and holy intimacy by viewing it in the light of Christ's own words. Cp. Matt. 11, 27; John 1, 18; 5, 19. 23; 8, 28. 42; 14, 7 ff.; 15, 9; chap. 17; 1 John 5, 20.

D) What, then, shall we learn from this astounding comparison if we cannot comprehend and explain it? Chiefly this, that our relationship with Jesus is a thing so wonderful that the world with all its wisdom and glory pales into insignificance aside of it. Phil. 3, 8. It is a heavenly relationship, patterned after the relationship which exists from everlasting to everlasting between the Father and the Son. Thus the believer is, as it were, lifted out of the world and placed side by side with the most high God; and that, while he is still living in this vale of tears. He is in the world, but not of the world. John 17, 16..

Conclusion. — Do you still believe that Christianity offers little or nothing for the living? Assuredly not; for in the two parables before us Christ has taught you otherwise. Brief recapitulation of the benefits and the glory of our relationship with Jesus. Hymn 87, 1.

E. J. FRIEDRICH.

Third Sunday after Easter, Jubilate.

John 16, 16—23.

The experiences of the disciples from Good Friday to Pentecost constitute a portrait in miniature of the believer's life in this world.

At first they were sorrowful. Jesus had died, and with Him they had buried their fondest hopes. Hence they wept and lamented, while the world, the forces of evil, rejoiced.

But on Easter Day their sorrow was turned into joy. John 20, 20. This joy increased with every appearance of Jesus, particularly at His ascension, Luke 24, 52, till Pentecost, when it became fuller, more robust, and firmly established in their hearts through the coming of the Holy Ghost. Cf. Acts 2, 46 f. Thus Jesus fulfilled His promise: v. 20. Their sorrow had not merely been followed by joy; it had *become* (*genesetai*) joy. The death of Jesus, the very event that had stricken terror into their hearts, was now their consolation and glory. Rom. 5, 8. 11; 8, 34; 1 John 1, 7; Heb. 10, 19; — Gal. 6, 14; 1 Cor. 1, 23; 2, 2. Thus they passed "from sorrow to joy and from mourning into a good day." Esther 9, 22.

V. 20b. These words enunciate one of the fundamental laws of

the Kingdom, an unalterable principle found in operation throughout the believer's life.

We, too, are often perplexed and disheartened by the prominence of grief in our lives and by the continual alternation of joy and sorrow. Cf. Ps. 73. Hence we may profitably consider: —

"From Sorrow to Joy" — the Divine Program for the Life of the Believer.

1. At the beginning of the believer's life; 2. During its unfolding; 3. At its consummation.

1.

A) "From sorrow to joy." This principle confronts us on the very threshold of the believer's spiritual life. There, too, the Lord's prediction is fulfilled, "Ye shall be sorrowful"; for *the spiritual life, faith, is born out of sorrow.* 2 Cor. 7, 10. Before a sinner can be regenerated, he must realize and deplore his sinfulness and his transgressions. To this point he is brought by the Law, Rom. 3, 20, that "thunderbolt of God by which He hurls to the ground both manifest sinners and hypocrites and . . . forces them, one and all, into terror and despair." (Smalc. Art., III, 3.) Where the Law has performed its office, there is "torture of conscience, true sorrow of heart, suffering and sensation of death." (*Ibid.*) Ps. 6, 2. 3. 6; 32, 3. 4; 38, 5; 40, 12. Illustrations: Luther's soul-struggles. (St. L., XIV, 460; VII, 913. 1135.) He spoke from experience when he said: "The greatest sorrow is a terrified conscience" (IV, 482), and when he describes this sorrow as "genuine contrition, which lays hold of the heart suddenly and fills it with fear and trembling, that the heart feels God's wrath and damnation resting upon it and . . . must cry out, 'Oh, what shall I do now? There is nothing here but sin and wrath!'" (XI, 714.) Also Augustine. Describing his conversion, he says: "I cast myself down I know not how, under a certain fig-tree, giving full vent to my tears; and the flood of my eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to Thee. . . . I sent up these sorrowful words: 'How long, how long? to-morrow and to-morrow? Why not now? Why is there not this hour an end to my uncleanness?'" Thus every one whom the Law has brought to the knowledge of his sins has sorrow.

B) But also here Jesus would fulfil His promise, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Coming through the Gospel, He invades the dark night of sorrow, anguish, and despair with the priceless gift of the forgiveness of sins and many precious promises. He invites: Matt. 11, 28 ff. He exhibits Himself as the Savior from sin and the Author of all true joy. Matt. 18, 11; 9, 6; Luke 4, 16—21; John 3, 16; 4, 14; 15, 11; 8, 12. The moment the contrite sinner is convinced that Jesus is his Savior, the moment he really believes in Him, all weeping and lamentation ceases, and his sorrow is turned

into joy; for now he knows that he is free from the guilt, dominion, and consequences of sin. Gal. 3, 13; 1 Thess. 1, 10; Heb. 2, 15. Cf. John 20, 20: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Illustration: Luther's experience with Rom. 1, 17. The joy which the Gospel finally kindled in him is revealed in the words: "Here I felt at once that I was wholly born again and that I had entered through open doors into paradise itself. That passage of Paul was truly to me the gate of paradise." (XIV, 447.) For a description of the joy of the regenerated soul see Luther, XII, 81 ff. (Hymn 82, 1. 6.)

C) Thus Christ's words John 16, 20b are fulfilled at the very inception of our spiritual life. First, the pangs of contrition, the godly sorrow, 2 Cor. 7, 8—10; then the rejoicing of faith, Luke 1, 46 f.; Jer. 31, 13b; Is. 35, 10.

2.

A) When the sinner is converted, he is not made immune against sorrow. On the contrary, sorrow will henceforth be an essential ingredient of his daily life. V. 20; Matt. 16, 24; 10, 38; Acts 14, 22b; Ps. 34, 19; 73, 13. 14; 1 Pet. 4, 12. The Christian is "born unto trouble." He is called to be a cross-bearer. *Luther:* "When faith has come into existence, God never fails to thrust the holy cross upon our shoulders in order that He may strengthen us and make our faith more vigorous." (IX, 1092.) "Very well, then, if I would be a Christian, I must also wear the royal livery. Our beloved Christ furnishes no other garb at His court. We are required to suffer."

B) The most poignant grief in the believer's life is caused *by his own repeated transgressions and by the consciousness of his inability to carry out his good resolutions.* Rom. 7, 15 ff. Temptations wax greater after conversion. Thus Augustine confessed that after his conversion he was still tormented by "the old infernal fire." (*Conf.*, X, 30.) *Luther:* "If thou art a Christian, thou wilt undoubtedly feel all sorts of evil impulses and inclinations in thy flesh. For as soon as there is faith, there arise a hundred evil thoughts, a hundred more temptations than before." (IX, 1194.) As a result the Christian sins daily and at times commits grievous transgressions. Peter, Luke 22, 54 ff. But he also repents daily. Ps. 40, 12 f.; 51, 1—3. This repentance is always coupled with sorrow. Luke 15, 21; 22, 62. In fact, the stronger the believer, the greater the sorrow. Why? — But also this sorrow is dispelled by the Gospel's assurances, *e. g.*, Rom. 5, 20; 1 John 2, 1 f.; Matt. 9, 2; 2 Cor. 12, 9; and joy enters into the heart, Ps. 51, 8; 89, 1a. Illustration: Disciples, John 20, 20. They rejoiced not only because Christ had risen, but also because His gracious presence among them proved that He had forgiven their unfaithfulness. (Hymn 109, 1.)

C) Other sorrows come into the life of the believer through *affliction and tribulation.* Some of these bitter experiences are the

consequences of past sins and mistakes. David, 2 Sam. 12, 10. Others come from the hand of God as blessings in disguise. Heb. 12, 6 ff.; Rom. 8, 28; 1 Cor. 11, 32. Cf. lives of Job and Joseph. — Our afflictions may be grouped under two heads: —

1) *Our spiritual afflictions,* the "trials of our faith." 1 Pet. 1, 7. Between Good Friday and Easter, when the disciples did not see Jesus, the foundations of their faith were shaken. They were perplexed, terrified, hopeless. Every Christian has seasons when the face of Jesus is eclipsed by doubts and fears, when the eternal truths of our religion are called in question and the Gospel itself appears insipid and ineffective. (Hymn 318, 3.) Then Satan assaults the heart from every angle. Then the soul lies in the dust and writhes in unspeakable anguish. It is driven to the brink of despair. Ps. 69, 2; 22, 14. 15; 25, 16—18; 116, 3; — Ps. 104, 29; Is. 54, 8. *Luther:* "When God's countenance is turned away from us, there immediately follow sorrow, dismay, and spiritual darkness. Then we are at our wit's end and grope about in the dark, searching in every direction for a way of escape." (IV, 857.) Then Christ's prophecy: "Ye shall weep and lament and be sorrowful," v. 20, is fulfilled in us. Cf. Christ in Gethsemane; Luther's soul-struggles after his conversion. — But it is God's will that also this sorrow should be turned into joy. "And again, a little while, and ye shall see Me." V. 19. If we cling to the Word and are fervent in prayer, God will send the strengthening angel. Luke 22, 43; 1 Cor. 10, 13. Gradually doubt and fear will vanish like the mists of night, and through a luminous rift in the clouds we shall again see the face of Jesus. Ps. 18, 28; 80, 4; Jer. 15, 16; Micah 7, 8. Then shall we again have joy and have it more abundantly than before; for the Lord bestows His choicest blessings upon us through spiritual agony and anguish. *Luther:* "All soul-trials have this purpose, that, although they seem to tear us away from Christ, they unite us more intimately with Him." (V, 1653.) "Every tribulation is a new birth, in which the new man is born and the old one dies." (VI, 326.) Thus the sorrows of the assailed and agonizing soul result, under God, in greater happiness. Jas. 1, 12. Illustration: Honey out of the carcass of the lion. Judg. 14, 9. *Luther:* "When you pass through tribulation, be sure never to despair, for you are near to glory and will triumph if you but keep the faith." (VI, 1612.)

2) *Our physical afflictions.* As believers we are to expect many. Ps. 34, 19; Acts 9, 16; Heb. 12, 6; 1 Pet. 4, 12; Matt. 16, 24; 2 Tim. 3, 12. Cf. St. Paul, 2 Cor. 11, 23—33; the church at Jerusalem, Acts 8, 1 ff.; the ten great persecutions under the Roman emperors. We, too, must endure physical afflictions: poverty, losses, sickness, persecution, misfortune of every description, bereavement. Ever and anon the Lord compels us "to eat the bread of adversity and to drink the water of affliction." Is. 30, 20. He leads us through dark valleys

of tribulation. Ps. 23, 4. When He does not send immediate relief in answer to our prayers, we sigh: Ps. 77, 7—9. V. 20 is literally fulfilled in our case. We weep audibly, cry as a child (*klausete*); we sing a dirge (*threnesete*); we are sorrow-stricken (*lupethesesthe*). — But also these sorrows shall be turned into joy. This the Lord does in one of two ways. Either a) He removes the causes of our sorrows by answering our prayers according to our wishes. Luke 1, 13; Matt. 9, 18; 20, 30 ff.; Acts 12, 5—12. When He has delivered us from our troubles, our hearts are glad, and we say with David: Ps. 30, 2—5. 11. Or b) He makes us capable of being "exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. 7, 4. Cf. 1 Thess. 1, 6. This is a special gift of God, a fruit of the Spirit, the mark of a matured Christian. When the believer has arrived at a firm confidence in God, he possesses the ability to rejoice in his tribulations, and that in the measure in which he understands the purposes, the value, the rewards, and the glory of tribulation. 1 Cor. 11, 32; Col. 1, 24; 1 Pet. 1, 7; Heb. 12, 5; Rom. 5, 3; 2 Cor. 4, 17; 1 Pet. 4, 13; 5, 1; Jas. 1, 12. Henceforth his attitude over against his afflictions is that of Paul, 2 Cor. 6, 10a; Ps. 119, 71. (Hymn 507, 2.)

D) Thus the Lord fulfils v. 20 in the course of the believer's spiritual development and growth. For the Christian, sorrow is always the harbinger of increased joy. Rom. 8, 28. Hence: Hymn 524, 3.

3.

A) But the Lord's prediction, "Ye shall weep and lament, . . . and ye shall be sorrowful," attains to its final and most awful fulfilment *in the hour of death.* Consider what death embraces: physical suffering, mental anguish, spiritual conflicts, the dying of the body, the closing of one's career, separation from loved ones, the abandoning of all possessions, the launching out into eternity, the appearance before the great tribunal. Small wonder that death strikes terror into the heart. Heb. 2, 15; Ps. 55, 4. 5; Job 10, 21. 22.

B) Notwithstanding this, however, the believer need not quail in the presence of death, for also the sorrows and agonies of death shall be turned into joy. In the twinkling of an eye "we shall see Him as He is," "face to face." 1 John 3, 2; 1 Cor. 13, 12. Then "the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Is. 60, 20, and the Savior's promise, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy," will be crowned with its most glorious fulfilment. Illustrations: Lazarus, Luke 16; the malefactor, Luke 23, 43. Cf. Matt. 25, 21; Rom. 8, 18; 2 Cor. 4, 17 f. — This will be a perfect joy, v. 21b; Ps. 16, 11a; Rev. 21, 4; 1 Cor. 2, 9; also a never-ending joy, v. 22c; Rev. 7, 14 ff.; 2 Cor. 4, 17. *Baxter:* "My Lord wept that now my tears might be wiped away; He bled that I might now rejoice; He was forsaken that I might not now be forsaken; He then died that I might now live." Hence: 1 Sam. 15, 32; Luke 2, 29 ff. (Hymn 559, 7.)

C) Thus even the sorrows of death are, for a believer, a prelude to joy, the perfect and everlasting joy of heaven.

Conclusion. — We have seen an outline of the divine program for the life of the believer. Sorrow is an indispensable element of the Christian life. Jesus states this as an important truth: "amen, amen" (v. 20). "The repetition of the word . . . has the force of a superlative, 'most assuredly.'" (Thayer.) Cf. Acts 14, 22. We need the discipline of sorrow. And according to our sorrows our joys will be meted out. Ps. 90, 15; 2 Cor. 4, 17. Let us, therefore, never despise the chastenings of the Lord, Heb. 12, 5 f.; Job 5, 17; Ps. 94, 12, nor become impatient or even rebellious in our afflictions, but make a consecrated effort to rejoice in our tribulations and to thank God for them, realizing the truth of Rom. 8, 28; Heb. 12, 11; John 16, 20. 22. In this, Jesus should be our pattern. Heb. 12, 2. (Hymn 334, 7.)

E. J. FRIEDRICH.

Fourth Sunday after Easter, Cantate.

John 16, 5—15.

Christians must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14, 22. That was the experience of Christ's disciples, especially of St. Paul. 2 Cor. 6, 4 ff. It falls to the lot of Christ's followers of to-day to suffer for His name's sake.

In spite of all this, however, it would not become a Christian to despair or even to speak and act as though some "strange thing" happened unto him. 1 Pet. 4, 12. "The disciple is not above his master," etc., Matt. 10, 24. 25; John 15, 20.

On the contrary, Christians should rejoice evermore, 1 Thess. 5, 16; rejoice in the Lord, Ps. 97, 14; Phil. 4, 4; in God their Savior, Rom. 5, 11; Luke 1, 47; in the Gospel, John 15, 11; 17, 13; in the way of life made known to them, Acts 2, 28; Ps. 13, 5; in hope, Rom. 12, 12; because their names are written in heaven, Luke 10, 20; aye, even in their infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. 12, 10.

Why should Christians, although sorrowful, alway rejoice? 2 Cor. 6, 10. Because their divine Savior has not left them comfortless.

Divine Comfort for Christians.

1. Such comfort is necessary. *2. Such comfort is forthcoming.*

1.

Divine comfort (relief, counsel, guidance, protection, encouragement) was necessary for Christ's disciples *because their Master was about to withdraw His visible presence from them.* Text v. 5: "But now I go my way to Him that sent me." The Father had sent Him.

John 16, 28. Jesus had been "so long time" (John 14, 9) with His disciples. Approximately three years. He had walked, talked with, and taught them, provided for them also in a temporal way, protected, comforted them. Now He was going away, and they should see Him no more. Neither should they be able to follow Him whither He went. John 7, 34. Hence sorrow claimed their hearts. Text, v. 6. Indeed, they were in need of comfort.

In need of *divine comfort.* Nothing that men have to offer would serve as a substitute for Christ's visible presence among them. Christ's followers are still in need of comfort from on high, and for the same reason. Christians believe in the Savior Jesus Christ, confess His name among men, and — suffer for it. Is there never a desire in their hearts for His visible presence on earth? for His own personal and audible comfort, counsel, guidance, and protection? Does not Satan use this carnal desire of the Christians to spread the error of a millennium?

Indeed, Christ's disciples need divine comfort *because they are still encumbered with the flesh,* the Old Adam. How clear this is from the text! Christ speaking to them: "But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?" Text, v. 5. See how selfish they are. No thoughts of the Master; thinking only of themselves. "So long has Jesus been with them as Guide and Protector, and now the time for departure has come. But instead of provoking all manner of inquiries on their part, the announcement has stunned them with sorrow. The Lord has discharged the mission for which He was sent and, in a manner of speaking, goes to report on a duty properly performed. But His words concerning His leaving find no interest on the part of the disciples as to His future welfare. Their attitude savors strongly of *selfishness* at the loss of the Master and grief at His departure. They are insensible to the real issues involved." (Kretzmann, *Pop. Com.,* Vol. 1, 498.) Selfishness, a chief characteristic of the Old Adam. Like St. Paul, Christ's disciples were by nature "carnal, sold under sin," Rom. 7, 14, and might have cried out with Paul: "O wretched man that I am!" etc. Rom. 7, 24. Even to-day, within every Christian, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. 5, 7; and wherever this is the case, divine comfort is a dire necessity; for the battle is fierce, and not always does the new man emerge victorious. With help from above alone will he win the battle.

Disciples need divine comfort *because they are still in the world.* When Christ returned to His Father, His disciples were left behind, in the world, John 17, 11, of which they were no longer a part and for that very reason hated, John 15, 19. What world? Not the material world, but the world of wickedness, of unbelief, unrighteousness, and spiritual bondage. Text, v. 8. Because of the difference be-

tween Christ's disciples and the children of this world, which is not in favor of the latter, but reproves them, and because of the fact that the Christians are in the minority, they necessarily fare badly in the world. And even though they were in the majority, they would not be spared. Matt. 10, 24. 25; John 15, 20. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." John 16, 33.

The world has not changed in the past nineteen centuries. It still hates Christ and, therefore, the Christians. It always will. What the world will do to the Christians, if given the opportunity and the power, is clear from history. In the course of the centuries the blood of thousands and thousands of martyrs has cried to God from the earth like the blood of Abel. And many who were not put to death outright by the enemies of Christ (and also by such as were avowed friends of His, while in fact fanatical errorists) died a thousand deaths in the course of their allotted three score years and ten. "For Thy sake are we killed all the day long." Ps. 44, 22. Divine comfort is necessary.

Disciples needed divine comfort *because they still saw as through a glass, darkly.* Text, v. 13. Much of what the Lord had told His disciples they did not understand in their present state "of little faith, of immature spirituality, mixed with sorrow and grief over His leaving," John 16, 18. 25; Matt. 16, 22; Luke 9, 44. 45; 18, 31—34, and many things had slipped their mind again, comforting sayings of which they needed to be reminded. Divine comfort is needed on this score, their ignorance. Nor are we of to-day minus this hindrance of happiness. 1 Cor. 13, 9—12. Our imperfections in heavenly knowledge and service puzzle us and cause us pain. Comfort from on high is needed to-day.

2.

Such comfort is forthcoming *in consequence of Christ's going away.* Text, v. 5: "But now I go My way." What is Christ's way? Cp. Matt. 20, 18. 19; Mark. 10, 33. 34. It is the way mapped out for Him from eternity and voluntarily chosen by Him, the *via dolorosa,* the way of redemption for a world steeped in sin, the way through humiliation to exaltation, the way of atonement for all our sins, of life and eternal salvation for all who believe in Him. Ah, here is divine comfort for all who are distressed because they cannot see the Savior with the eyes of their body, because their sinful flesh causes them no end of trouble, because they must dwell in a hostile world, and because they must wait till eternity for a full understanding of many things they desire to look into here and now! Christ is the Way. Faith in Him is sufficient unto us now. Other things can wait. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed," John 20, 20. Some day we shall see "face to face" and know even also as we are known. 1 Cor. 13, 12. Christ's way leads to the Father, John

14, 28; it reconciles us unto the Father; it means mansions in heaven for us. John 14, 2. Here is divine comfort for sorrowing Christians.

This comfort comes to them *according to, and by means of, Christ's Word.* His Word is reliable. He is not only the Way, but also the Truth. John 14, 6. Christ had promised His disciples "another Comforter." John 14, 16. 26. The coming of this Comforter necessitated His, Christ's, going away. Text, v. 7. It appears from the words, "It is expedient for you," etc., that the disciples were to have more benefit from the work of the Holy Ghost than they had had of the personal, visible presence of the Lord when He dwelt among them in the form of a servant. That same benefit is ours to-day. No need of being sorry, then, because Christ is not visibly present with us in the manner in which He dwelt with His disciples. Christ, in the form of a servant, could not abide with His disciples forever; but the Comforter should abide forever. John 14, 16. Christ dwelt with them in the state of humiliation; the Comforter, ever exalted, should remain, not only with, but in them. John 14, 17; 1 Cor. 3, 16. What joy to know that we Christians are, individually, the temple of the Holy Ghost! The Comforter in accordance with Christ's promises, came to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Christ's Word is the vehicle He uses to-day in coming to men and making their abode with and in them. Indeed, divine comfort comes solely, but surely, in and through the Gospel. Christ has merited divine comfort for us; in the Gospel it is offered, conveyed, and sealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Divine comfort comes *by the work of the Holy Ghost,* who operates through the Word of God. What is His work? Text, vv. 8—11. He "reproves," convicts, painfully convinces, the world that unbelief is the sin of sins, vv. 8. 9; that man's own righteousness avails nothing before God, but only the righteousness of Jesus Christ, vv. 8. 10; that the world in its folly is serving Satan still, although He has been "judged," conquered by Christ and condemned. On the other hand, the Holy Ghost, having called the Christians by the Gospel, enlightens them with His gifts, "guides" them "into all truth," v. 13, and glorifies their Savior in and through them. V. 14. What comfort for Christians is this work of the Comforter in their behalf! Again, by reproving the world, on the one hand, and comforting the Christians, on the other, the Holy Ghost justifies the existence, and emphasizes the need, of Christianity in the world. What comfort for Christians to know that!

This comfort came to the apostles on the day of Pentecost and remained with them through life. Further comfort came to them in this way, that they were employed by the Comforter as His mouthpieces in the work of reproving the world and building up the Christian Church in spirit and numbers. Thus they were comforted indeed — with divine comfort.

We of to-day, Christ's disciples of the twentieth century, have the same Comforter and, hence, the same comfort in the work of the Holy Ghost. What blessedness for Christians to know that the Holy Ghost is with them, to have God on their side, with them and in them! That puts the Christians in the majority in this hostile world. In this battle between right and wrong, faith and unbelief, waged between the Christian Church and the world, the Comforter weighs more than the whole world. Think of the mighty conquests of the Gospel since the birth of the Christian Church. Let the world sneer at the Christians because they live by faith and not by sight, they will laugh last, and he who laughs last laughs best. However, we are not to take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Christ gave His life for them), no more than our heavenly Father does, Ezek. 33, 11; 1 Tim. 2, 4; 2 Pet. 3, 9; but rather let us find joy in proclaiming unto them the Word of God in order that the Holy Ghost through our instrumentality and the Word may lead them to accept their Savior in true faith, to be clothed with the spotless robe of His righteousness, and to live unto Him in righteousness and purity forever.

Divine comfort is needed by the Christians, and, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is forthcoming, not sparingly, but in unspeakable abundance. Summarize. 1 Pet. 1, 3—9. (Hymn 512, 1)

C. T. Spitz.

Fifth Sunday after Easter, Rogate.

John 16, 23—30.

Satan would move us to adopt a cold philosophy about God and destiny. That would make prayer unnecessary. It would also be the end of Christianity. One of the chief functions of Christianity is for Christians to commune with God in prayer. The Bible has much to say about prayer and a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. God's children have ever turned to Him in their troubles and have had their prayers answered. Not always was the answer exactly what they had expected (God's wisdom is not subject to human ignorance), but there was an answer nevertheless. God's mercy was never withheld from them.

It is true, however, that we are in need of instruction in the art of praying effectively. Our text contains the very lesson on prayer which we need. Christ is the Teacher; there is none better. Let us sit at His feet and learn —

Christ's Lesson on Prayer.

He teaches us

1. To whom we are to pray; *2. How we are to pray;*
3. Why we are to pray.

1.

To whom are we to pray?

Certainly not to idols, the "vanities" of the heathen. That would not be pleasing to God. Israel tried it, and God said: "They have moved Me to anger with their vanities." Deut. 32, 21. "They left all the commandments of the Lord, their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. . . . Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of His sight." 2 Kings 17, 15.

Prayer to idols is an *abomination* to the living God. He says: "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another neither My praise to graven images." Is. 42, 8.

Then, there is the *folly* of idolatry. "Their idols are silver and gold, *the work of men's hands.* They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Ps. 115, 4—8. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art not Thou He, O Lord, our God?" Jer. 14, 22. St. Paul tells the people at Lystra who fain would worship him and Barnabas because they had miraculously healed a man who was impotent in his feet: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you and preach unto you that ye should turn from these *vanities* unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." Acts 14, 15.

Yes, to the living God. Text, v. 23: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father." The Father is the first person of the Holy Trinity, called Father because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and also our true Father. John 20, 17. Our prayers are to be directed to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the only true God, even as we are to be baptized in His name. We may pray to the Father alone, to the Son alone, to the Holy Ghost alone, provided it is not our intention by so doing to deny the deity either of one or both of the other persons of the Godhead. The prayers of the present-day Jews, the Unitarians, Universalists, and lodges are not prayers to the only true and living God, but to idols; for they reject Christ and deny His deity, at least in their rituals. Although they may address themselves in supplications to the Father, even though they pray the Lord's Prayer, their prayers are a stench in the judgment of God. Remember the words of Jesus: "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him." John 5, 23.

But why does Jesus in our text mention the Father specifically? While Christ was with His disciples on earth, they brought their petitions chiefly before Him. That is true not only of the Twelve, Matt. 8, 25; Luke 11, 1; John 14, 8; Matt. 24, 3, but of His wider circle of disciples as well. John 11, 1 (Mary and Martha). Recall the many other instances recorded in the four gospels of prayers directed to Jesus in behalf of the sick and such as were possessed by devils or by the sick themselves. In fact, Christ's disciples continued to pray to Him even after He, in answer to one of their prayers, had taught them the Lord's Prayer, directed to the Father. Luke 11, 1. This is not saying that they failed to use the prayer He taught them, but only this — while He was visibly with them, they chiefly looked to Him for all they were in need of. Moreover, their Master was praying to their heavenly Father for them. Christ's Sacerdotal Prayer (John 17) was not the first and only one He offered up for them. — Even to-day Christ's followers may and should come to Him in prayer. Our *Liturgy and Agenda* contains many collects and prayers addressed directly and solely to Christ. And we have prayers directed to the Holy Ghost. Such prayers are nowhere forbidden in the Bible. True, in His farewell words to His disciples Jesus says (text, v. 23 a): "In that day ye shall ask *Me* nothing . . . ye shall ask the Father." "That day" — Pentecost. These words support our contention that they had been offering prayer chiefly to the Master while He was with them. After His departure they should turn again in prayer to the Father and pray to Him chiefly. Moreover, "in that day" the Comforter should teach them "all things," John 14, 26, and that includes the answer to the question, To whom shall we pray? For the Christian there is but one answer: To the only true and living God, the Triune God. Deut. 6, 4; Matt. 28, 19; 2 Cor. 13, 14, as He revealed Himself at the baptism of Jesus. He alone is willing and able to answer our prayers. Ps. 65, 1. 2.

2.

How shall we pray?

In the name of Jesus. V. 23: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in My name.*" What is the key to these words? V. 28: "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father." Why had Christ come forth from, or why was He sent by, the Father? Answer: "For God so loved the world that He gave ["delivered," Acts 2, 23, *i. e.*, offered up as a ransom for sin, 2 Cor. 5, 21] His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 16. 17. We are to pray in Jesus' name because Jesus has redeemed us to God by His blood. Rev. 5, 9. "In My name" is equivalent to saying "on My

account, for My sake." V. 28 is a brief description of the entire redemptive work of Christ.

To pray in Jesus' name *demands faith* in Him, a belief in His deity and in His meritorious work, a knowledge thereof and a firm confidence therein. Ye "have *believed* that I came out from God." V. 27 b. Men without this faith will not pray in Jesus' name, nor would their prayers be answered, if they did mention His name; for hypocrites find no favor with God.

Faith in Jesus Christ calls for *acceptance of His promise concerning the prayer made in His name.* Here is the promise: "Verily, verily [note the double solemn affirmation], I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, *He will give it you.* . . . Ask, and *ye shall receive,* that your joy may be full." Vv. 23. 24. And here is the proof for our statement: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing,* ye shall receive." Matt. 21, 22. The prayer of one who does not believe the Lord's promises concerning prayer in Jesus' name is vain.

Furthermore, faith in the Savior and His merits *leads us to approach the Father in the right spirit* — humbly like the publican, not arrogantly like the Pharisee, pleading God's mercy, not our own merits, and yet to approach Him boldly, Heb. 4, 16; it moves us to pray fervently, Jas. 5, 16; with importunity, Luke 11, 5; Matt. 15, 22, without ceasing, 1 Thess. 5, 17; alone in our closet, Matt. 6, 6; wherever we may be, 1 Tim. 2, 8; together with the congregation of believers, Ps. 26, 12; not from selfish motives, but with an eye to the welfare of others first, 1 Tim. 2, 1; even for our enemies, Matt. 5, 44 (Christ prayed for His foes on the cross); for the Church (Second Petition); for the success of mission-work, Eph. 6, 19; for the saints, Eph. 6, 18; leaving the time and manner of answering our prayers to God; to pray our prayers instead of merely saying them thoughtlessly, to refrain from vain repetition, Matt. 6, 7.

What posture should we assume while praying? Shall we stand when praying or be seated or lie down? Shall we pray on bended knee? with folded hands? with hands uplifted? with hands behind our back? Shall we pray with eyes turned heavenward? or earthward? with eyes open? or closed? Shall we read or not read prayers? Shall we pray aloud or silently? These are weighty questions to all those people who are accustomed to strain at gnats and swallow camels. The Bible has little or nothing to say on this matter. One of the few references to posture during prayer is found 1 Tim. 2, 8: "Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." But the emphasis is on the words "holy, . . . without wrath and doubting." Prayer is an act of worship, and whether our worship is acceptable to God or not entirely depends on the heart. Heb. 10, 22; John 4, 24. Here it is best to follow the custom of one's church.

3.

Why should we pray?

Because we have the Lord's command to do so. Jesus says (v. 24): "Ask." This command is repeated many times in Scriptures. Cp. Matt. 7, 7. 8; Eph. 6, 18; Phil. 4, 6; Col. 4, 2; 1 Thess. 5, 17; etc. Prayer is one of the foremost of Christian duties and cannot be neglected without great loss. No prayer— no child of God.

Because of the promises attached to the command to pray. "He will give it you," v. 23; "ye shall receive that your joy may be full," v. 24. Need we a greater incentive to pray? Oh, if only we had a stronger faith! "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Because of our troubles. The disciples were in trouble. The Master was going away. They themselves were to be scattered. John 16, 32. When it happened, they felt as though their sun had set. But praying to the Father in Jesus' name, their sorrows should vanish like mist before the noonday sun, their joy should be full. V. 24. In answer to prayer they should be freed from their despondency and grief at His departure; they should see the reason why He left them, be comforted by the Holy Ghost, and sustained in the arduous trials of their ministry. Instances of the joy which supplanted their sorrow: Acts 13, 52; Rom. 14, 8; 2 Cor. 2, 3; Gal. 5, 22; 1 Thess. 1, 6; 2, 19. 20; 3, 9; 1 Pet. 1, 8. Troubles fly away and joys come in answer to true prayer.

Because God's love of the Christians invites their prayers. "For the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God." V. 27. The more children know themselves loved of their father, the more will they confide in him and request of him.

Because we must not leave it to Christ alone to pray for us. "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you." V. 26. In chap. 14, 16 Jesus says: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter." In chap. 17 He offers up His memorable prayer for them. Heb. 7, 25 it is said of Christ that He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Christ's declaration in our text, v. 26 b, then, does not mean that He *would* not intercede for them, but that there was no need of His telling them again and that this is no excuse for our neglect of prayer. Much rather, let this knowledge spur us on to persevere in prayer and to learn the art thereof ever better. Any child can grasp this lesson on prayer. C. T. Spitz.

Sixth Sunday after Easter, Exaudi.

John 15, 26—16, 4.

In spite of the much-vaunted enlightenment of our twentieth century will any one deny that darkness still covers the earth and gross darkness the people? Is. 60, 1. We are thinking, of course, of spiritual darkness, the darkness of not knowing one's Savior, of not desiring to know Him (wilful unbelief); the darkness of Satan's power, Acts 26, 18, of Satan's works, Rom. 13, 12. 13 — spiritual darkness, which in eternity becomes "outer darkness," where there is weeping (howling, Luther) and gnashing of teeth. Matt. 8, 12. About one billion eight hundred million people are thought to inhabit our earth at the present time, and less than one third of these are believed to be Christians, *i. e.*, to have "come to the light." Is. 60, 3.

The Light of the world has been proclaimed to men since the days of Adam, in olden times in the form of Messianic promises and since the days of Christ in the form of the fulfilment of those promises. Christ is the Light of the world, the "Sun of Righteousness." John 8, 12; 9, 5; 1, 9. This Light shines in the world in the glorious Gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. 4, 4, through which it enters the hearts of all that believe, giving them "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 4, 6, transforming them into "the light of the world," Matt. 5, 14, which is to shine before men in their good works to the glory of God, Matt. 5, 16, and especially in this way that they serve as witnesses unto Jesus, showing forth His praises before men. 1 Pet. 2, 9.

It is thus alone, namely, through the faithful testimony of the Christians, that the number of those "who sit in darkness" will diminish and the number of the children of light will increase. Let, then, every Christian be a witness-bearer unto Christ.

However, let us inquire: —

What Kind of Witness-Bearers does Christ Desire?

1. Knowing witness-bearers; 2. Doing witness-bearers; 3. Courageous witness-bearers.

1.

Christ desires *knowing* witness-bearers.

Text, v. 27. Jesus chose His disciples as His witnesses. *They had faith in Him.* Faith on the part of Christ's disciples and witness-bearers, faith in Christ as the promised Messiah, the Light of the world, John 8, 12, of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, Is. 49, 6; faith in Him as their personal Savior, personal faith, is presupposed in our text. Unbelievers may, and sometimes do, bear testimony in favor of Jesus and His glorious cause (Pontius Pilate, Herod, Judas

Iscariot declared the innocence of Christ); but the unbelievers have no call to testify of Him.

Christ chooses His disciples because they are His friends. John 15, 14; Luke 12, 4. His cause shall rest in the hands of those who love Him. Their duty it is to bear witness unto Christ before men, before His friends, and also before His enemies, in order that His enemies, too, might become His friends and followers.

Christ chooses His disciples as witness-bearers because, as He says unto them, "Ye have been with me from the beginning." V. 27. They had been with Him from the time He entered upon His public ministry. Matt. 4, 17—22; Acts 1, 21—22. They knew Him better than anybody else, and for that reason they are chosen of Christ, John 15, 10, to speak the truth (as under oath) concerning Him before the world. They were familiar with Jesus and His teachings, His person and His work, even now and had been for some time, to the extent that they exclaimed on one occasion: John 6, 68. 69. The doubts they still had were dispelled, the knowledge they lacked was supplied, when on Pentecost the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, sent by Jesus from the Father for this very purpose, text, v. 26; John 14, 26, was poured out upon them, illuminating them from on high. In fact, the coming of the Comforter was promised of Christ, and the Comforter came on Pentecost, for no less important purpose than this: to bear testimony of Jesus, text v. 26 ("He shall testify of Me"), in the hearts and minds of the apostles in order that, as Christ's witnesses before men, they might have the knowledge and the conviction necessary to make their testimony effective.

"Ye also shall bear witness," ye Christians, ye followers of Christ of to-day. Most of you have been with Him from the beginning, *i. e.,* from the beginning of your life. You were brought to Him in Holy Baptism in infancy. Thus you were born again and became Christ's followers, His friends, who love Him and would in love serve Him, His witnesses. 1 Pet. 2, 9; Mark. 16, 15; Matt. 28, 29. 20. The world needs our testimony of Christ, as we have heard before. True, the Lord might without human assistance draw all men unto Himself (even as He created the universe without human help); but He has chosen the Christians to bear witness before men in order that by their testimony of Him men may be drawn to Him. And this task of bearing witness unto Christ is not an indifferent one. First of all, it calls for men who know whereof they speak, for men who are able to give to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them, 1 Pet. 3, 15, and who are able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Tit. 1, 9.

But how may we become such knowing witness-bearers unto Christ? Not of ourselves, 1 Cor. 2, 14, of our own mind, Rom. 8, 7; it is the work of God's Holy Spirit in and through the Word of God,

who guides us into all truth, John 16, 13, glorifies Christ in us, John 16, 14, and gives us the knowledge we need. 2 Cor. 4, 6. The Bible is our text-book in the school of the Holy Ghost, by which the Spirit of Truth would remove our ignorance in spiritual matters and give us the light of knowledge instead thereof. Stress Scripture-reading, ransacking the Scriptures, John 5, 39; regular attendance and attention at divine services, Luke 11, 28; the value of the Christian day-school, the Sunday-school, the Bible class, of sufficient confirmation instruction for children and adult catechumens, remembering this one thing first: The Lord desires witness-bearers *who know*.

2.

Doing witness-bearers.

Text, v. 26. *The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, the chief Witness of Christ,* the Guide of all of Christ's human witnesses, is never idle. He not only is an inerrant, but also an active Witness of the Savior, active wherever the Word of God, in and through which His power is felt and exercised, is known and heard, making known the Savior for the health of the soul.

"Ye [My disciples] *also* shall bear witness." V. 27. Like the Holy Ghost, your Guide, you also (notice, not *may,* but) *shall* testify of Me. Like the Holy Ghost, you, too, shall be active witness-bearers unto me.

And did the apostles of Jesus understand it that way? Were they active in the ministry of Christ? Their Master had said unto them on another occasion: "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1, 8. That was assigning a large field and a mighty task to such a few men. Did they cover the field and accomplish the task? "Yes, verily," says St. Paul, "their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world." Rom. 10, 18. Not in their own strength, of course, did they achieve this, but in the power of the Holy Ghost. Acts 1, 8 a. Read the Acts of the Apostles and be convinced that they were active witnesses unto Jesus. Acts 5, 42; 4, 20. 29; etc.

"Ye also shall bear witness," *means us, too,* us, Christ's followers of to-day. 1 Pet. 2, 9 ("show forth"). Cp. Mark 16, 15; Matt. 28, 15. 16; etc. Two imperatives are prominent in the words of Jesus addressed to men: "Come" and "Go." "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. 11, 28. "Go . . . preach the Gospel." Mark 16, 15. All Christians are to confess Christ before men, Matt. 10, 32; all are to confess Him, not only in words, but also in deeds. Matt. 5, 16. Personal evangelism one would call it. One phase of it: Urge churchless to attend divine services with you, to send their children to your Sunday-school or to your Christian day-school. Hand or mail them your used church-papers

and Christian tracts, etc. Another phase: Congregational evangelism — God-pleasing publicity; house-to-house canvass for mission material, follow-up work ("Compel them to come in," Luke 14, 23); cheerful, liberal, and intelligent support of synodical work, etc. "The world is our field."

Bearing witness for Christ will ever be a Christian's foremost business. Let us be active therein, "not slothful." Rom. 12, 11. Illustration: Christ at twelve years of age, Luke 2, 49, and throughout His sojourn on earth. John 9, 4.

3.

Courageous witness-bearers.

It takes courage to be an active, faithful witness for Christ. Text, v. 2: "They shall put you out of the synagogs; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Active and faithful witnesses must be prepared to suffer at the hands of those who know not "the Father, nor Me [Christ]." V. 3. Fanatical errorists as well as the infidel will deal harshly with them, thinking that thus they are serving God.

These predictions of Christ came true in the case of His apostles. When they began to preach the Gospel, they were excommunicated from their former religious assemblies, Acts 4, 10. 18. 21; 9, 23. 24; 17, 5; 21, 27—31. Aye, all but one of them died a martyr's death.

Nor were the apostles the only witnesses of Christ thus treated. Stephen was stoned to death, Acts 7, 57—60. Their converts were persecuted by Saul, Acts 8, 4; the congregation at Jerusalem was scattered abroad, Acts 8, 1. Persecutions by the Caesars. Middle Ages: John Huss, burned at the stake, Juli 6, 1415; Jerome of Prague, likewise burned, May 30, 1416; Luther, persecuted; Protestants, put to death by fanatical Romanists (Spanish Inquisition, massacre of Huguenots in Paris, Bartholomew Night, 1572), etc. It took courage then to confess Christ and the truth of His Word.

It takes courage to-day to face the enemies of Christ (Modernists; secret orders) and errorists with the truth of the message of salvation in Him alone. Scorn, ridicule, hatred, ostracism, if nothing worse, must be expected by them.

Jesus' apostles had the courage after that the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them. The same men who had been so timid before, had fled when the Master was apprehended by His foes, Mark 14, 50, and had after His resurrection been found by Him behind locked doors out of fear of the Jews after Pentecost go boldly forth as witness-bearers of Christ, fearing nothing. Acts 7, 54—60; 5, 41. The Comforter was with them.

Moreover, the Lord had told them all these things, had forewarned them. Vv. 1. 4. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. How-

ever, it was the Holy Spirit who endowed them with the courage necessary to face calmly and fearlessly all obstacles and all dangers of their way.

Christ's witness-bearers of to-day have the same Comforter and therefore the same comfort and the same source of courage. We have not received the special gifts of the Holy Ghost enjoyed only by the apostles of Christ and a number of their immediate followers, but the gift of the Holy Ghost nevertheless. He was to come and to *abide with Christ's people forever.* John 14, 16. Cp. Acts 2, 38. 39: "Unto you and unto your children," etc.

Looking to the Holy Ghost for enlightenment, strength, and fortitude, let us go forward in the world as knowing, doing, and courageous witness-bearers of our Savior Jesus Christ in order that His name may be known "where'er the Sun doth his successive journeys run," to the salvation of many souls. C. T. Spitz.

Pentecost Sunday.

John 14, 23—31.

The origin of Pentecost dates back to the time when the children of Israel entered the Promised Land. Lev. 23, 10. 15. 16. It was known at first as the Festival of Weeks because it was celebrated seven full weeks, or fifty days, after the Passover, Ex. 34, 22; Deut. 16, 10. 16; Lev. 23, 15. 16; 2 Chron. 8, 13; also as the Feast of the Harvest, because it concluded the harvest of the later grain, Ex. 23, 16; furthermore, the Day of First-fruits, because the first loaves made from the new grain were then offered on the altar, Lev. 23, 17. Later (at least this was the case at the time of Christ and still is among the Jews) Pentecost was observed by the Jews also in commemoration of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, which occurred fifty days (it is believed) after the Passover and the Exodus. The Christians, however, observe Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Easter, the Lord's resurrection, and the tenth day after His ascension, because of the fact that on this day, according to Christ's promises and a number of prophecies of old, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the disciples of Christ at Jerusalem and because on that day the Christian Church was born. Acts 2, 1—41. So much for the history of Pentecost.

Pentecost not only has a history, but also a message. Of old the message of Pentecost was chiefly one of the Law. It was kept according to law and in remembrance of the giving of the Law. To-day, the message of Pentecost is a Gospel-message, *i. e.,* the message of the Christians' Pentecost.

The Message of the Christians' Pentecost.

1. A message of love; *3. A message of peace;*
2. A message of light; *4. A message of joy.*

1.

Our Gospel-lesson for Pentecost contains *a message of love.* a) *Love of Jesus for His disciples.* The parting Savior is engaged in comforting His sorrowing disciples, who are "not of the world," but must continue in the world, although the world hates them for Jesus' sake. John 15, 18. 19; 17, 14. The comfort of His visible presence is about to be withdrawn from them, but He promises His disciples not to leave them "comfortless," fatherless, orphaned, John 14, 18, but to send them "another Comforter," who was to abide with them "forever," v. 15; promises them that He and His Father (and the Holy Spirit; for where the Father and the Son are, the Holy Spirit will also be) will come and make their abode with them if they but love Him and keep His words, v. 23; promises to send them the Comforter, who was to open their understanding, v. 26, in order that His, their Master's, words might no longer be "proverbs," John 16, 24, *i. e.,* dark, enigmatical sayings, to them; bestows upon them, in order to calm their troubled hearts, the benediction of His peace, v. 27, a peace such as the world cannot give; speaks of the joy that will be theirs if they love Him, v. 28, and understand the meaning of His going to the Father, both for Himself and for them. Behold how the Master loved His disciples in spite of all their shortcomings. What loving concern He shows in behalf of their welfare!

b) *Love of the Father for Christ's disciples.* V. 23. "And My Father will love him." Christ's disciples are all those who love Him and keep His words. Jesus does not deny that His apostles are such; cf. v. 23. He is merely stating a fact which men are so apt to forget and which therefore must be stated again and again. And what a love, the Father's love for the followers of Christ! A love like that of the Savior. It moves Him and His Son Jesus Christ to do what Jesus here says: "And We will come unto him and make Our abode with him," *i. e.,* with him whom We love. V. 23. "Our abode" — not a mere temporary visit, but an abiding stay. "Come unto him" — through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. "Make Our abode with him," with, *in* him. "We," the Holy Trinity. 1 Cor. 3, 16; 6, 19; 2 Cor. 6, 16. Marvelous love, the love of the Holy Trinity for those who love Christ and keep His words! (Such love for Christ, of course, presupposes saving faith in Christ, John 3, 16, the faith that worketh by love.) The Triune God with them always and within them. Jesus says it, and He adds: "And the Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." V. 24b. That is true of all He ever told them; it is true of what He has said to them just now. And this is the Christians' Pentecost Gospel, a mes-

sage of the love of God for the followers of Christ, aye, for all men. John 3, 16; Matt. 18, 11.

Love begets love. God's love for man cannot fail of finding response in the hearts of men, especially in the hearts of those who know Him, the Father, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Therefore our Pentecost Gospel *speaks of disciple-love for Christ.* V. 23: "If a man love Me"; v. 28: "If ye loved Me." Christ desires to be loved by all men; for He has redeemed them all. The Father desires to be loved by all men; for He so loved them all that He gave His only-begotten Son to be their Savior. The Holy Spirit loves them all so much that He would sanctify them all through faith in the Gospel which He inspired the apostles to write. Mark 16, 15. However, love of God on the part of man demands knowledge of God, that knowledge upon which saving faith rests, that faith the fruit of which is love, love of God and man. Gal. 5, 6.

Yes, love of man for man also, of the Christians for one another, John 15, 35; Heb. 13, 1; 1 Pet. 2, 17 b; for their neighbor, Mark 12, 31; for their enemies, Matt. 5, 44; Luke 6, 27. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4, 20.

On Pentecost the Christian Church was born. By the grace of God we are members thereof and enjoy its glorious blessings. What reasons to love God and our Savior Jesus Christ! What reasons to show our love for our fellow-men by bringing them the saving message of love, the glad tidings of the grace of God in Jesus Christ! The Christians' Pentecost-message is a message of love.

2.

Also a message of *light.*

Christ's disciples needed light at the time when Jesus spoke His farewell words to them. They were in the dark concerning many things He spoke unto them. John 16, 18. 25. To us who know all that happened later Jesus' words about His death, etc., are plain; but to the disciples who were filled with Jewish prejudices, they appeared exceedingly obscure.

The light is promised. Text, v. 26. The "Comforter," "the Spirit of Truth," should come; the Father would send Him in Christ's name, and He should enlighten them. He should "serve as their teacher, giving them the understanding of all things which they still had in memory and recalling to their minds such things as they had forgotten." (Kretzmann, *Pop. Com.,* Vol. I, 492.)

The promise is fulfilled. Acts 2. And were they, the apostles, enlightened thereafter? Cp. Acts 2, 22—36, especially in connection with Matt. 16, 22; Luke 9, 44. 45; 18, 31—34.

The light which came to the apostles on Pentecost is *still shining in the world.* Seek for it in the New Testament. The apostles were guided "into all truth" (not into *new* truths, but into the truth of "whatsoever I [Christ] have said unto you," v. 26) by the Holy Ghost, John 16, 13, when they *wrote* as well as when they *spoke.* Here is an incontrovertible proof for the inspiration of the New Testament, through which the Holy Spirit even to-day enlightens all who come to Christ, having called them by the very Gospel which it, together with the Old Testament, also inspired by Him, 2 Tim. 3, 16, contains.

Through "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ," 2 Cor. 4, 4, He has "shined in *our* hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. 4, 6, that excellency of knowledge besides which, St. Paul says, he counts all things but "loss" and "dung." Phil. 3, 8. Who, then, will deny that the message of the Christians' Pentecost is one of light? "Ye are the light of the world." "Arise, shine."

3.

A message of *peace.*

Christ's disciples were in need of peace. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says the Master to them. John 16, 33. They were no longer of the world and could therefore expect no favors of the world. John 15, 19.

Christ gives them peace. V. 27. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Peace, the opposite of being "troubled" at heart and being "afraid." V. 27 c. The latter was the condition their hearts were in because the Master had told them He was going away. Nothing this world has to offer could make up for their loss of Him, they thought. It is true: Christ lost, everything lost; Christ gained, everything gained. In view of their great sorrow at His going, the Lord, seeking to quiet their troubled hearts, said: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," v. 18; "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also," v. 3; cf. 28 b. He promises the coming of the Holy Trinity to them. V. 23. But they admittedly do not understand, and therefore the Lord promises them the Comforter. "By these truths and promises He provided for their peace in the time of His approaching departure."

"But the expression refers also, doubtless, to the peace which is given to *all* who love the Savior." The Law condemns them because of their sins, and they are troubled; but by faith in Jesus they are reconciled to God, their conscience is at ease because of the forgiveness of their sins, eternal life is assured to them, and thus the peace of God which passes all understanding rests upon them. That, pri-

marily, is the peace Jesus bequeaths to His followers. He calls it "My peace" because He procured it for all sinners on Calvary. He *gives,* offers, conveys, and seals peace to men through the means of grace. Of such a peace the world knows nothing.

The enjoyment of Christ's peace came to the disciples *fully on the day of Pentecost* and continued with them through life. Realizing the preciousness thereof, they wanted others to have it also and at once proclaimed it to the multitude; and through their message and the blessing and power of the Holy Ghost the same peace descended upon three thousand of their hearers that very day. Acts 2, 37—47.

Christ's peace is offered to all men in the Gospel which the Christians are commissioned to preach the world over. Blessed are they that search the Scriptures for it, that hear the Word of God and keep it; blessed are they that proclaim it. Verily, the message of the Christians' Pentecost is one of peace.

4.

A message of *joy.*

Not the pleasures of sin, Heb. 11, 25, worldly lusts, Titus 2, 12, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, 1 John 2, 16. Such pleasures are vain. 1 John 2, 17; Eccl. 2. Moreover, they war against the soul. 1 Pet. 2, 11. The Lord very emphatically warns against them. 1 John 2, 15. 16; Rom. 12, 2; etc.

Heavenly joy. "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice." V. 28 b. How true! As surely as those who love Christ will keep His words, v. 23, just so surely will those who love Christ be full of joy; and that joy will be kindled in their hearts through His words. Could there be a more joy-enkindling message than Christ's words, the Gospel? Think of the Christmas-message: Luke 2, 10. 11; the Easter-message: "He is risen; He lives"; and the Pentecost-message of our text: vv. 26. 27. What joy also to hear of Christ's going to the Father, v. 28, knowing what it means for the Savior, namely, the end of His deep humiliation; and for a sin-cursed world, namely, the completion of His redemptive work, the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, v. 30 b, the establishment on the earth of the Christian Church and light, peace, and joy for the members thereof; knowing that it is also a proof of His love for the Father, with all that it implies, v. 31, and of His willing obedience!

Let us be joyful on Pentecost. Its message is unmistakably the purest and sweetest Gospel, a message of love, light, peace, and joy. (Hymn 464, 3.)

C. T. Spitz.

Trinity Sunday.

John 3, 1—15.

The Christian's God is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence. All other gods are false gods to them, "vanities." Deut. 32, 21; Acts 14, 15. In the Triune God Christians believe (Apostles' Creed); Him they worship "in spirit and in truth," John 4, 23; Him they would serve all the days of their life (confirmation vow); in Him they rejoice. Phil. 4, 4.

And, verily, the God of the Christians is worthy of their adoration. 1 Chron. 16, 7—36. Indeed, He is the God of glory, "for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." Rom. 11, 36.

Not the least of God's glory are His wonderful works. Ps. 19, 1; 139, 14; Deut. 3, 24. Creation. Redemption. Sanctification.

God is good to all His creatures, Acts 17, 27. 28; Heb. 1, 3; Ps. 145, 15. 16, to the evil as well as the good, Matt. 5, 45. He is especially good to His Church, which, Is. 62, 3, He calls His "diadem," His "crown of glory," the crown of all His works, because He has clothed her "with the garment of salvation" and "covered her with the robe of righteousness." Is. 61, 10. The members of His Church, the Christians, are His "jewels," Mal. 3, 17, the jewels in His crown of glory. Truly, they have reason to worship the Triune God. But the question arises, how did they become God's jewels? Let us, then, consider the question: —

How Does a Christian Become a Jewel in God's Crown of Glory?

1. Not by nature, but *2. By virtue of the new birth.*

1.

Text, v. 3b: "Except a man," etc. "Man" — human being. Term includes women and children. "Cannot see [enter] the kingdom of God." No human being is by nature a jewel in God's crown of glory, but a lost and condemned creature.

This is not God's fault. God originally made man in His own image, His own likeness. Gen. 1, 26. 27. God, the Holy Trinity, did. Notice the plural personal pronoun *us* in v. 26. God is perfectly holy and righteous, and so was man when he left the hands of His Creator. Eph. 4, 24. Man was "very good" then. Gen. 1, 31. Originally the earth was the Lord's crown of glory, and man was the foremost jewel therein.

But the fall of man. Gen. 3, 1 ff. Since then "all men, as they are born into the world, are flesh born of the flesh (v. 6b); theirs is a sinful, corrupt nature, alienated from God, hostile to God." Cp. Rom. 8, 5—8; 5, 12. Original sin, Ps. 51, 5; Rom. 7, 18; Gen. 8, 21; Eph. 2, 3, leading to actual sins, Matt. 15, 19; 1 John 3, 4.

"The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23; Gen. 2, 17; Ezek. 18, 20. With sin, death entered the world, temporal death, Rom. 5, 12; eternal death, eternal damnation, hell, Is. 66, 24; Luke 16, 23. 24. This is the eventual lot of man, whom God originally created for life, unless he be born again.

Is not this a terrible doctrine? To the flesh, indeed. But remember: "He that soweth to his flesh [this includes hearkening to the voice of the flesh] shall of the flesh reap corruption," Gal. 6, 8. It is Jesus' doctrine. He knows whereof He speaks. Text, v. 11. He accompanies His statement with a solemn double affirmation: V. 3. Has Christ's word any weight? Nicodemus calls Him "a Teacher come from God," and a miracle-worker. V. 2. Jesus does not contradict him. The fact of the matter is that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, who has come down from heaven, is now dwelling on earth while at the same time He is still in heaven. V. 13. His doctrines are those of the Godhead. John 5, 19; 14, 10. It is the Triune God who affirms that all men are by nature outside of the kingdom of God and eternally lost unless they are born again.

Is there really no exception to this rule? None except Jesus Himself. But He was not flesh born of the flesh in the sense of v. 6a. Jesus "was by the miraculous working of the Holy Ghost conceived a true man by the Virgin Mary." Luke 1, 35. Among mere men there is no exception. Nicodemus was no exception, although he was a good man in the sight of men. He was a Pharisee and, according to Christ's own testimony (v. 10) "a master [teacher] of Israel," "a ruler of the Jews," *i. e.,* a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jewish Church, John 7, 50; he was respected by his fellow-men because of his exemplary personal and civil righteousness; he was highly honorable because of his justice, his fairness, John 7, 51; he was apparently considerably interested in Jesus, kept himself informed concerning Christ's doctrines and miracles, thought highly of Him, v. 2, and was anxious to learn Christ's views concerning the way to heaven. (It was with this matter in mind that he approached Jesus. The Lord knows this and answers his question before it is put.) Yet the Lord tells this virtuous, learned, influential, truth-seeking ruler and teacher of his people: "Ye must be born again." V. 7b. Without the new birth, Nicodemus would have been lost as well as the meanest character in Israel and the idolatrous pagans round about.

This was the sad condition of every Christian by nature, spiritually blind, dead, and hostile to God and subject to the divine wrath and eternal condemnation, all because of his sins. But, lo, he has become a jewel in God's crown of glory, a citizen of God's glorious kingdom!

2.

Made possible by the *heavenly Father's unspeakable love of* a perishing world, John 3, 16, and *by Christ's inestimable sacrifice.* V. 14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," etc. The children of Israel had murmured against Moses and Aaron, their God-appointed leaders in the wilderness. Thereupon the Lord, as a punishment upon His rebellious people, sent fiery serpents among them. All that were bitten died, and many were bitten. Then Israel repented. In answer to Moses' intercession for them the Lord of mercy told Moses to erect a brazen serpent on a pole and promised that all who were bitten by the fiery serpents and looked upon the uplifted serpent should live. Num. 21, 4—9. Here was life, temporal life, for a look. Yonder brazen serpent was a type and symbol of Christ. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." V. 14; John 8, 28. Man has rebelled against God. The fiery serpent of hell has stung him. 1 John 3, 8. Death, both temporal and eternal, is inevitable. "*Surely* die." Gen. 2, 17. Sin is the sting of Satan; the Law, the strength of the sting. 1 Cor. 15. 56. "The Son of Man," is the Messiah, the incarnate Son of God, v. 13, the Crucified One (Passion history), the uplifted Savior. Behold Him hanging on Calvary's cross. Look and live. "Believe," v. 15, accept Him in simple, trusting faith. Christians are jewels in God's crown of glory because they have looked upon the cross where Jesus Christ "gave Himself a ransom for many," 1 Tim. 2, 6, suffered and died as men's Substitute, Is. 53, 4 ff., where He, their Savior, who fulfilled the Law for them, Gal. 4, 4. 5, removed its curse, Gal. 3, 13, abolished death, 2 Tim. 1, 10, conquered Satan, Gen. 3, 15, atoned for all their sins, 1 John 2, 2, opened heaven for them, Acts 7, 56, is lifted up.

Through regeneration. Regeneration is not reform. To reform a man means to make him better morally, to deliver him from vicious habits as, for example, the drunkard from drink, the criminal from following a career of crime, etc. To regenerate a man means to give him "a new heart." Ps. 51, 10; Ezek. 11, 19; 36, 26. Nicodemus needed not to be reformed, but he did need to be born again. The reform of a man may be wrought by himself or by others with human or earthly means. A drunkard may be constrained to do better if strong drink is withheld from him; the criminal, by being put behind prison bars. Because of temporal considerations, or even eternal (thinking of those who would merit their own salvation), men have at times "mended their ways." But regeneration is beyond human power. Regeneration, the new birth, means to give sight to the spiritually blind, 1 Cor. 2, 14, life to the spiritually dead, Eph. 2, 1, and to replace enmity against God, Rom. 8, 7, with love for Him. Man might as well try to raise the dead as to regenerate a man.

By the Holy Spirit. Although a stumbling-block to human reason, vv. 4. 9. 12, notwithstanding the fact that human reason will accept as true and real the mysteries of nature, v. 8, this "marvel," v. 7, the new birth, regeneration, is real. To be born again means not a natural rebirth, v. 4 (if that were possible, it would yet leave a man just as he was before), but simply to be brought to believe in Jesus Christ as the uplifted Savior of the world, v. 15, and in the salvation that is "through faith in His blood." Rom. 3, 25. This belief, or faith, is the gift of God, Eph. 2, 8, wrought by the Holy Ghost, text, v. 5; 1 Cor. 12, 3, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," 1 Cor. 6, 11, and in harmony with the gracious will of the Father, 2 Tim. 1, 9; John 3, 16. The new birth is also known as the new creation. 2 Cor. 5, 17; Gal. 6, 15. Text, v. 6b: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," "has the Spirit's mind; his heart, mind, and will are directed to God and to that which pertains to God."

Means of regeneration. Holy Baptism, v. 5, the washing of regeneration, Titus 3, 5, "the word of God which is in and with the water." Luther. "This Sacrament actually works and gives new life; the water is not merely a symbol, but an actual means, through the power of the Word, in working salvation. But one that has been converted in this way and has thus become a partaker of the grace of God, thereby enters into the kingdom of heaven, into the invisible Church." (Kretzmann, *Pop. Com.,* Vol. 1, 421.)

That is the grace that has come to the Christians. Created of God and redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, they have been born again in Holy Baptism through the operation of the Holy Ghost, have been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, have entered the holy Christian Church, the crown of God's glory, and are honored as the jewels thereof. Is it any wonder the Triune God is the God they love and adore? Is it any wonder they celebrate Trinity Sunday in His honor?

Jewels sparkle. Christians, "ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 4, 14a. 16.

C. T. Spitz.

First Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 16, 19—31.

The average man has a peculiar interest in the future. Perhaps most men have a strong inclination, a penchant, to discover something about the condition, or state, of the soul after it leaves the body in death. Even such as are otherwise irreligious and churchless often manifest a strange fondness for occupying their minds with speculations, suppositions, and conjectures about the hereafter.

To satisfy this craving of knowing something about the future life, most men employ means of their own selection. Poets have given rein to their imagination, depicting in vivid terms and extravagant language what their fancy dictated concerning the mysteries of the future world. Papers and magazines have a singular bent to entertain their readers with articles delving into the life that is to come, claiming the ability to fathom the depths of the "unknown." Much is written and read on this subject to gratify the incessant desire and hankering of the human heart and mind along these lines. Even a church, falsely so called, has been organized which pretends to put her devotees in direct and personal communication and touch with departed spirits. The strange fact that the Spiritualists are finding so many adherents in well-nigh all lands is, among other things, an evidence of man's interest in the future life.

Needless to say that all these and many other expedients are absolutely unsatisfactory and inadequate. No sufficient results are obtained by resorting to such means. A groping in the dark. Effusions of morbid minds. Blind leaders of the blind. Human reason, be its intellectual powers ever so highly developed by education, study, and research, does not know anything about the future life. The faculties of the human mind, of natural man, are limited on this subject just as much as in other spiritual things, neither does he know them.

Here the question arises: Can anything certain, reliable, be known about the hereafter? Is it knowable? Or shall we sink into the abyss of agnosticism, that sad state of mind which declares all things pertaining to the soul, things which cannot be grasped with the hands, "unknown and unknowable"?

Thanks to God, we need not sneeringly ask with the Pilates of the present age, "What is truth?" Thanks to God, we have a "more sure Word of Prophecy" than these "cunningly devised fables." (2 Pet. 1.) Such a sure and reliable Word of Prophecy we have in the Gospel-lesson for this Sunday. Here Jesus Himself speaks, the Mouth of Truth, who knows the past as well as the present and future, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Here He draws aside the veil permitting a glimpse into the future life. Though but a short lesson, yet it is sufficient; all needed details are given. And what Jesus spoke He has caused to be laid down in writing, so that we may have a reliable foundation upon which to build our belief in the future existence. No uncertain terms are here employed. A positive truth is here exhibited. Doubts and unsettled opinions are dispelled. We have here a sure foundation-stone to build our hopes upon. Cf. Luke 16, 17.

Let us, then, learn ever better this most necessary lesson: —

The Bible, the Only Reliable Revelation about the Future Life.

1. It discloses the true nature of conditions in the future life.
2. It teaches the correct attitude towards the life to come.

1.

The story of our text is well known to every reader of the Bible. We need not enlarge upon the details and branch out into matters of secondary importance. The scope of this text, the aim and purpose, is a revelation about the future.

In the first place: its nature, character, and conditions.

a) *The number of places.* But two. No more, no less. The words of our Lord here used are very clear and explicit. No uncertain, doubtful, much less ambiguous statements, leaving the minds to fluctuate and waver or admit different interpretations.

Not *more* than two places. No intermediate state. Not the slightest indication here to be found in any word that souls after leaving the body must first be cleansed, purged, purified, from the dross and slags of sin not as yet removed.

No Roman purgatory, neither a state which has been called a "Protestant purgatory," *i. e.*, a condition in which souls after death are dormant, torpid, neither suffering any pain nor partaking of any bliss. The ancient pagan "realm of shades" disguised in Biblical words.

Nor are there *fewer* than two places. Not only *one* place in the hereafter. Frequently the vague notion is found that "you just have to die to get to heaven." Dying in itself does not bring to heaven. Death alone has no saving qualities. Prov. 11, 7.

Hence it is one of two — and only two — places to which a soul on leaving the body must pass.

An immediate passage from the present to the future. Text clear on this point. Note the rapid succession of words. Both men are at once transferred to their respective places after death. Luke 23, 43; Rev. 14, 13; Heb. 9, 7; Eccl. 11, 3.

b) The *character* of these two places.

The words of the Lord here are just as clear as elsewhere in Scripture. Both places described in short, concise, pithy terms — "heaven and hell." No quibbling about either word.

"Heaven," the place of the "fulness of joy." Ps. 16, 11. Called "Abraham's bosom" to indicate the one true faith which brings to heaven. Abraham believed the word of the Lord, and "He counted it to him for righteousness." Gen. 15, 6. Gathered in a haven of safety and rest. Union and unity with all children of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Moreover, "the Father's bosom." John 1, 18. In the immediate presence of God, seeing Him "as He is," 1 John 3, 2; the highest degree of bliss. The end of faith. Moses was not permitted to see the face of God. Ex. 33. Paul was "caught up into

paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter." 2 Cor. 12, 4. In heaven the poorest Lazarus can enjoy seeing God and find words eloquently to sing the praises of the Triune God together with the thousand-voiced angelic choirs and all the other saints.

"Now he is comforted." Everything pleasant included in this word. Freedom from all ravages caused by sin on body and soul. Relief from want, poverty, exposure, sickness. Rev. 21, 4. Trials, temptations, and enticements overcome; no more inclination to sin. A complete fulfilment of the Seventh Petition. Human eyes have not seen the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him, but He has caused His Spirit to reveal them and have them laid down in writing. 1 Cor. 2, 9 f.; Rev. 14, 13.

But there is also another state in the future life. Revealed in our text and elsewhere in the Bible. We must not turn away from what is told us about it, ghastly as it is. Evading to speak about hell is avoiding a duty. Ezek. 33; cf. 13, 18. The same book which speaks of heaven also speaks of hell; of salvation and damnation.

"Hell," the place of "torments" (mark the plural). Human language fails to give an adequate description. Intense pain of body and soul. Matt. 10, 28. Excruciating suffering, agony, torture, within and without. Shame, contempt, unrelenting hatred of one another. Eternal death, yet consciousness. The rich man is aware of his sad plight; knows where he is; remembers, thinks, speaks. His conscience is awakened, Is. 66, 24; there is a feeling of guilt and remorse, but a remorse that avails him nothing. Utterly forsaken, abandoned, by God. Hos. 4, 6 has come true. Seeing only the wrathful, but never getting a glimpse of the benign, face of God. Stricken from the book of the living.

No need of speculating where hell may be located or to inquire with subtilties about the physical qualities and peculiarities and possibilities of hell-fire. The various descriptions given in the Bible about hell are not to be discussed in a skeptical manner, but they are intended as so many warnings to stay away from this place of torments. How carefully should a flippant and blasphemous use of this most awful word be avoided!

c) *Duration* of the future existence.

Eternal. While this word is not used here, nevertheless it is evident from the whole text that future life is unlimited. The entire structure of the story, the course of thought, and the general purport of the dialog between Abraham and the rich man prove this to be an established fact.

That the bliss of heaven is endless no one doubts. But as far as the everlasting duration of hell is concerned, there are many who dispute and deny it. Books are written, tracts are sent free of charge to any one who wants them, and talks are broadcast to disprove this

unpleasant fact. But Scripture is profuse in setting forth the truth of an everlasting punishment. Is. 66, 24; Matt. 25, 41; 2 Thess. 1, 9; cf. Matt. 5, 26; 25, 10.

Neither is there a final annihilation of the lost, as some erroneously imagine, *i. e.*, that bodies and souls, after having been in torment for a long while, are at last utterly destroyed, reduced to nothing, put out of existence. That would be a relief, a distant, faint hope. But here are the stern words of the Bible; terrible, but true: Rev. 14, 11. Upon the gates of hell are written these glaring words: Let all who enter here leave all hope behind!

Such, then, is the presentation of our text regarding future life. But it does not end there. To know something about future life is but half the lesson. It would be vain to look toward the future without making preparations to escape from hell and gain heaven.

Hence the Bible also teaches the only correct attitude toward the future life.

2.

The rich man took a wrong attitude. First, by ignoring the future, never giving eternity a thought. Not that he was a criminal, a bad man, in the accepted sense of the word. On the contrary, he seems to have been a hail-fellow-well-met. Life to him meant nothing beyond the gratification of carnal lusts; he regarded it as a round of pleasure, a rush from one enjoyment to the other, a continuous whirl in sensuality until drawn under the whirlpool of the flesh, until even the higher human traits were blunted and stunted, until all sense (sensorium) for spiritual things became blighted and decayed. No taste and no time for things pertaining to the soul! Lives only for the present.

What a picture of our present-day pleasure-mad generation in its misuse of the riches and prosperity showered down by the Giver of all gifts! A sure sign of the approaching Judgment Day, like in the days before the Flood. Matt. 24, 38. Whoso readeth, let him understand!

Another wrong attitude the rich man took with regard to the future was in having his own notions about being saved. He prescribes a way of his own fabrication and invention. He obstinately insists upon having his own way. Stubbornly he continues to contradict: "Nay, Father Abraham." He knows things better than Abraham, who had walked in faith before God and by so doing had obtained the end of faith.

Living your own life is a wrong attitude to the future and ends in eternal perdition. Let us be warned by the example of the rich man. —

But we hasten to ask: Which is the only correct attitude to take toward the future?

This important question is fully answered in our text by Abraham: "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them," and: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

A short, comprehensive, definite, understandable rule to obtain eternal life.

"Moses and the Prophets" are to be heard, not as ghosts and specters risen from the dead, but in the living words they have written, moved by the Holy Ghost, which are able to make wise unto salvation.

"Moses and the Prophets," *i. e.*, the sum total of the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel. All Scripture, not certain pet doctrines; the whole counsel of God: doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction.

"Moses and the Prophets" must be heard, not only *had*. Heard, not with the organ of hearing only, but with the mind, the heart. An effective hearing, a hearing producing results. Heard, not for entertainment, pastime, but for eternity. Heard, not occasionally, but richly. This hearing to be first in importance and first as to time devoted to it. The one thing needful.

Conversely: "If they hear not Moses," etc. Salvation as well as deliverance from the torments of hell is comprised in the Word of God. No other expedient known to man. No salvation in any other than Christ. The Word the only means of grace. A messenger from the dead could not proclaim more important truths than those revealed in the Bible.

This information is final. Abraham here ends his instruction. Nothing else is to be said.

Conclusion. — Let us heed the solemn lesson of to-day's Gospel. We all stand in need of exhortation to take the right attitude toward the hereafter. Eternity is drawing nearer every day. What folly not to prepare for it; to walk the broad path and expect to enter in at the strait gate; to live the life of a worldling and be gathered into Abraham's bosom! Let us be warned by the example of the rich man. Let there be an earnest appeal for the faithful use of the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. Do not expect God to adopt any other means for your salvation; supernatural revelations, extraordinary signs and miracles. He has limited us to His revealed Word as laid down in the Bible. Let us cultivate a close acquaintance with it. Hear, read, meditate. Do not resist the pleadings of the Holy Ghost, who works through and in the Word. Fervently pray for His enlightening influence to keep you in the one true faith, so that you may finally, with all believers, be taken into Abraham's bosom; for the Word of God is a power unto salvation to every one that believeth.

T. STEPHAN.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 14, 16—24.

On a certain occasion a man asked Jesus the question: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Luke 13, 23. The Lord did not answer directly, for He does not wish His disciples to engage in religious conversation merely for the sake of speculating about sacred things. He gave to His reply a practical turn, couching it in the form of an admonition, saying: Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." Jesus says here in effect: Yes, there are but few that will be saved; but be sure that you do not merely treat this as a theoretical matter, but let it be a question of deep personal concern to you. Strive that you may not belong to the number of those that will be lost. While we must be very careful lest this subject be one of mere speculation with us, the fact stands out boldly that salvation will not be reached by all, but by a few only. It is a sad, startling truth, confirmed by Jesus in the words: "Many are called, but few are chosen." We ask at once: Where does the fault lie? Who is to blame for this woeful state of affairs? It is this question which we shall consider this morning. We ask, then: —

Why Is It that So Many People do Not Become Partakers of the Joys of the Kingdom of Christ and Enter Heaven?

Our text answers: The fault is

1. Not God's, *2. But their own.*

1.

A) a) It might be thought that men themselves have to prepare the joys which we possess in Christ's kingdom and from which we pass into heaven and that the reason why so many people do not enjoy these things is that they fail to provide them for themselves. Does not the man who wishes to have a house have to build a house, as a rule? If the farmer wishes to reap, he must sow.

b) This is indeed what our reason tells us. It insists that man's destiny lies in his own hands. Its answer to the question, How can I become a child of God? is, Do good, do right. What you wish to possess you yourself have to achieve.

c) This idea, however, is totally contradicted by our text. The parable before us speaks of a certain man who made a great supper and who afterwards invited people to partake of it. The guests had not moved a finger. It would be folly to say that they were invited to come to a meal which they themselves had provided or paid for. The application is evident. God it is who has prepared a wonderful banquet, namely, forgiveness of sins, peace, joy, the Holy Spirit, a new heart, and a place in heaven. Man does not have to call into

existence, or buy, these things; they have been gotten ready by the love of God.

d) The Scriptures tell us much about the preparation of God's gracious banquet, supplying our highest needs. In eternity it was planned. Acts 2, 23. "When the fulness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son" to make this banquet an actuality. Christ suffered and died as our Substitute and thus paid our debts, reconciling us to God and procuring for us all the great blessings which are here comprehensively and beautifully described as a great supper. Hence, as far as the preparation of the blessings offered in Christ's kingdom is concerned, no one can say that it is God's fault if certain people do not attain them.

B) a) It might be held that God, having prepared a great repast, failed to inform men to this effect and that this failure of His, to supply the needed information about the existence of these treasures, accounts for the many vacant seats in Christ's banquet hall. One must admit that such a situation is conceivable. How frequently have we not heard of people who have perished from want of food or water, when they were within easy reach of these necessities of life, but were ignorant of the fact that help was so near.

b) To make such a situation responsible for the loss of so many souls is branded as false by our text. The servant of the wealthy man in the parable is sent to the people that had been bidden with a message: "Come, for all things are now ready." It is true that this information was needed, and we see it was given. This part of the parable reminds us that God has broadcast a message into the world, telling of His great love and of what He has done for mankind and inviting all to come and to partake of the blessings which He is offering. "Come, for all things are now ready," is His invitation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The whole Gospel, from beginning to end, is God's invitation, bringing us the needed information as to the help He has provided for us.

c) It was an invitation that was first proclaimed among the Jews. There is no mistaking that Jesus in this parable, in speaking of guests that have been bidden, is referring to the respectable men and women of the house of Israel. Among the Jews, Jesus labored as Prophet, Himself promulgating God's invitation for more than three years. In fact, they were the only ones among whom the Savior worked in person. What a glorious manner of inviting these people God employed — letting His own Son move in their midst as His Herald!

d) Next the Gospel was preached to the lowly in Israel, the scum, the outcasts; for evidently these are the people Jesus has in mind when He makes the wealthy man of the parable say to his servant, v. 21: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the

city," etc. To these people Jesus Himself published the great Gospel tidings in spite of the sneers of the Pharisees and scribes.

e) By and by the Gospel was proclaimed to the heathen also; for is not the Lord referring to them in v. 23, when He makes the master say unto the servant: "Go out into the highways and hedges," etc.? We see that those people, too, are invited who are living at a distance — quite an apt description of the poor heathen. Hence, we see that God did not keep people in ignorance as to the existence of His great blessings, accomplished for mankind through the work of Christ.

f) The difficult question arises: Is it not true, after all, that God has permitted many heathen to remain in the dark about His great supper? Many of them have never heard the Gospel. It has been answered that, if people did not get the Gospel, it was due to this, that God foresaw they would not accept it, even if they should receive it. For another thing, the blame for the spiritual blindness of the millions of heathen lies with us Christians, who are so slow and selfish when the Gospel is to be spread. But here we must stop. We cannot look into the council-chamber of God and see why He in every particular is ordering the course of nations as He does. One thing is certain, it is not His fault if anybody is lost. This is confirmed by several other considerations.

C) a) It might be thought that some people are too unworthy and that on this account they are barred from joining in the enjoyment of God's blessings as provided in Christ's kingdom. Some are too great sinners, it may be charged, and their vileness keeps them out.

b) This is the favorite answer of many people to the question we are considering. Sinners are invited and asked to enter God's banquet hall. But you must not be too great a sinner. If your hands are too black, you will not be admitted.

c) How wrong this is we can see from v. 21 and v. 23. As we heard before, the people in Judea who ranked lowest in the social scale, the publicans, the harlots, were invited; likewise did the invitation reach the heathen, who wallowed in pools of wickedness. Therefore it is not the magnitude of any sin that is keeping people out of association with God and Christ.

d) We are all sinners, and in the eyes of God there is no difference. Rom. 3, 22. Let no one get the notion that he is less of a sinner than others and that on that account he is accepted, while his brother is rejected. If anybody has such an opinion of himself, then he is ascribing some merit, some goodness, to himself, and through relying on his own virtue and righteousness he would be closing to himself the doors of heaven.

e) Do not examples from history bear out the statement that it is not the heinousness, the blackness, the magnitude of certain

sins that exclude people from the Kingdom of Grace and Glory? David was accepted. Paul entered that kingdom. Ever so many vile sinners. To the Corinthians Paul writes, 1 Cor. 6, 9—11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? . . . And such were some of you, but ye are washed," etc.

D) a) It might be thought that God quite arbitrarily has decreed that certain people are not to join in the bliss of salvation and of heaven.

b) This very idea, in fact, has been proclaimed by men who bore the title of Christian ministers and teachers. It was one of the great tenets of Calvin that God has predestined certain men to damnation.

c) But this notion is contradicted by the whole Bible, including our text. God loved the world. John 3, 16. "He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Cor. 5, 19. The text indicates that the wealthy man who made a great supper did not exclude anybody from participation in his banquet. He had provided room at his tables for all. V. 22.

Hence we see that in no way can the blame for the fact that so many people do not get to enjoy the glorious things that Christ has earned be placed on God. He has provided the banquet of salvation; He invites people to come and partake of it; He does not let the unworthiness of sinners induce Him to refuse them admission; He did not foreordain that certain people should not be received into the hall where the great supper is served. But if we have to absolve God of all blame in this respect, where does the fault lie for the damnation of so many people? We reply, With man himself.

2.

A) a) The people that had been bidden to attend the supper would not come, v. 18 ff.

b) If we make the application that Jesus wishes us to make, His words say that many people who hear the Gospel invitation will not accept it. We see this before our eyes every day, living in a land where the precious message of redemption is proclaimed far and wide and where, nevertheless, many refuse, etc.

c) The words of the text in question were true especially of the Jews. When Jesus spoke this parable, His career among Israel was drawing to a close. For almost three years He had labored in their midst, but the great majority refused to accept His message; the fault was entirely theirs.

B) a) We inquire after the reason why people refuse to accept the invitation of God. The guests in the parable mention their reasons in vv. 18—20. Other things appeared more attractive and alluring to them.

b) So it is in the spiritual realm. For many the glamor of this world's riches, activities, and amusements is too great. They prefer earthly possessions and pleasures.

c) The blessings of the kingdom of Jesus are spiritual, invisible. You cannot see the forgiveness of sins, you cannot weigh in your scales the Holy Spirit and the peace that He provides; hence people turn back on the Gospel invitation. They wish to give their attention to things that eye can see and ear can hear. One thing is clear, their doom is of their own choosing.

C) a) Their attitude is dreadful in its consequences. In v. 24 the master says: "For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

b) The application is clear. If a person will not accept the invitation of God, he will not taste the sweetness of the gifts that are offered to him by the Savior.

c) It might be thought that God will force people to enter the kingdom of His Son. However, such a method is altogether foreign to His way of dealing with mankind. He who will not have His grace and persists in that attitude will not receive it. God does not force His mercies on people.

d) Sinner, do not despise the Gospel invitation. It comes to you now. It comes in this Gospel-lesson. Hear the call: "Come, for all things are now ready." Do not reject this invitation. Open your heart and let Jesus be your Savior. If you do reject Him and you die in this state, then the word will apply to you: "I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper," and throughout eternity you will lament: "It is my own fault." Diligently use the means of grace, whereby faith is engendered, and pray to God to keep you in the true faith till the end.

W. ARNDT.

Third Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 15, 1—10.

"There are two kinds of men — the righteous who believe themselves sinners and the sinners who believe themselves righteous." Lost and found; found and lost. Both kinds in text. Publicans who drew near to Jesus and heard Him, v. 1, who turned backs on past lives and repented, stood condemned before court of own conscience, yet were righteous in God's sight by grace, through faith. Pharisees who murmured against His goodness, v. 2, whose lives were untarnished in eyes of world, and who believed themselves righteous were in reality burdened with a great weight of unforgiven sins.

Result: Holy One of God could not fellowship with the Pharisees and scribes. Neither could He let their insinuation go unchallenged that He was lowering Himself to standards of publicans and sinners by continuing His blessed mission among them. Entire chapter strong defense of Savior's position. He judges critics out of their own mouth, while with words more enduring than marble and more precious than gold He comforts the weak and the penitent who thought they were utterly lost, but were found.

The Search for the Lost.

1. The search on the Savior's part.

A) *The object of His quest.* — Striking picture conjured up vv. 3. 4. Picture of great and good Shepherd, — great, because of His loving interest in lowliest member of flock; good, because of His self-denial and perseverance in the search for the lost. The lost sheep may be taken individually, to mean one sinner, and collectively, many sinners. John 10, 11; Is. 53, 6. When a sheep is once lost; when it has escaped the shepherd's tender care and, after a time of careless wanderings, can not find again the cooling springs, the green meadows, the safe trails; when it is far away from the sheltering hurdles, exhausted from weariness, fear, burning thirst, — unless it be that the shepherd find it, nothing can save it from the vultures wheeling above or the wolves gathering in the thicket. When some one has wandered away from God, avoiding the gentle staff of His Word, breaking through the fence of the Law, forsaking the green pastures of the Gospel and refreshing springs of prayer, little hope for his salvation unless the Good Shepherd find him.

When a certain evangelist disappeared in 1926 at Ocean Park, Cal., a great search was on. Airplanes droned overhead, cutters skimmed over the surface of the bay, divers groped on the bottom of the sea (one losing his life), white-robed followers paraded the beach, high-powered automobiles raced over near-by mountain and canyon roads, searching parties scoured the hills, all revealing a zeal worthy of a better cause. Other examples: The search for the ill-fated Nobile party in the Arctic regions; the search for the Southern Cross (1929) until found without supplies on a lonely mud-flat out of Australia. In each case, search for leaders among men. Text, search for lowly, despised, rebellious, among men. Joyous, blessed news for world of lost sinners that, while there is life, the search is on. The Searcher no less a one than the Good Shepherd from heaven, come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19, 10; 1 Tim. 1, 15. None too long lost, none too far gone, to be object of Savior's quest.

B) *The salvation He offers.* — According to an Arabian proverb, sin has five fingers. Two, for eyes that they may not see earnestness of purpose in God's commands nor ugliness and deceitfulness of sin,

which comes in with laughter and goes out with shame and weeping. Two, for ears that they may be deaf to every word of warning. One, for mouth that it may voice no objection. Bible uses stronger language: sinner spiritually blind, deaf, dumb, in natural state, utterly helpless, lost, sold, dead in sin. Story of wealthy Hindu who boarded ship at Bombay loaded down with chains; could move about only with help of servants, could never know any peace or comfort. Squatted on deck in midst of chains, he explained that, while still a young man, he had vowed to put on a link for every sin he committed; now helpless under cruel weight of six hundred pounds. It is blessed message of Gospel that Christ has broken the dread fetters of superstition, fear, sin, death, and hell. Atoned for our transgressions with crimson flood that trickled down tree of the cross. 1 Pet. 1, 18. 19. Every one who looks to Jesus in faith is a sheep that is found. Found it, laid it on shoulders with rejoicing. V. 5. "But none of the ransomed ever knew How deep were the waters crossed Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through Ere He found His sheep that was lost."

C) *The happy end of the search.* — Note shepherd's tender care does not end with the finding of the sheep nor with first joyous gathering of it in his arms. Does not chide it or attempt to drive it. Cheerfully adds its weight to his own, tramps back all that weary way which lost sheep had so wantonly wandered. Finds joy in his toil; added weight, a burden of love. Not content until he has brought stray one safely home and made known the happy end of the search. Calleth together friends and neighbors. V. 6. Application, v. 7. Savior's home is heaven. He must sustain and carry us all the way. He Himself is the Way. Self-righteous, who think they need no repentance, must remain out in wilderness of this world. John 14, 6. But coming to the Father by Him, we are assured of a kindly, joyous welcome. "Angels will echo around the throne: Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own."

Though dark be the way, with eyes of faith
We gaze on His cross above.
And, lo! from each heart the shadows depart
As we list to those words of love:
Rest, rest, to the weary; peace, peace, to the soul;
Though life may be dreary, earth is not thy goal.
Oh, lay down thy burden; oh, come unto Me!
I will not forsake thee, though all else should flee.

2. The search on the part of the Church.

A) *The scope of the second parable.* — Some commentators assume that the parable of the lost piece of silver is identical in all points with that of the lost sheep. And, it is true, they convey the same general meaning. Search much the same from the seeking to

the finding and rejoicing. Vv. 8—10. Yet there appears to be a difference. Savior never lost a sheep through any fault or neglect on His part. John 18, 9. "Was lost," v. 6. Sheep wandered away of its own volition; had freedom and power to go if it would. This cannot be said of the lost piece of silver. It could not run away, could not lose itself. The responsibility rather rested on woman. "I had lost," v. 9. Through some carelessness or forgetfulness on her part she lost it.

We cannot, therefore, identify woman with Christ, as we do the shepherd in first parable. Woman rather is the Church. Bible uses that picture consistently. Church is source of comfort and hope to numberless sinners, but not perfect like her Master. Sometimes she is fearful, sometimes overconfident, misguided, in error, careless, neglectful, loses soul here and there. But so long as she is the Church of Christ, she will never give up search for the lost. *Luther:* "This parable of the woman deals with the Christian Church, which holds the office of the holy ministry to this purpose, that the poor sinners may be called to repentance and may be saved from eternal death and damnation."

B) *Some food for thought.* — Church can never forget that every human soul is a creation of God and originally bore His image. Lines defaced since Fall, as image on coin long lost and corroded; yet she will light candle of God's Word, proclaim message of redemption, shine into dark corners of earth. Where she has failed, she will sweep house, v. 8, go down on her knees in slums and lanes of city in search of souls that belong to Jesus. Counts it all labor of love, brings sacrifices, bears burdens cheerfully for Savior's sake, until she begins to reflect His glory.

What is your part in this search for the lost? as a member of Synod? of this congregation? as an individual in the Church? Are you searching "diligently"? v. 8, shining? holding candle aloft? leading way? glorifying God with your life? Illustration: A friendless boy who had known nothing but unkindness and want from his earliest childhood lay ill with a fever. A certain Christian heard of his great need, went to see him, spoke to him kindly, cooled his brow, brought him medicine, food, fruit, and told him of the heavenly Father. After a long wondering silence, the child asked timidly: "Sir, are you Jesus?" Purpose of Church on earth is to carry on Savior's work, reflect His goodness, comfort forsaken, regain erring, find lost, lead poor, groping souls to Him.

C) *The joy of success.* When a sinner has been found after a long and diligent search and the silver of his soul shines forth above the dross of sin and something of the divine image is restored by the water of Holy Baptism and the cleansing power of Christ's atoning blood, there is much cause for rejoicing on earth and among

the angels of God in heaven. V. 10. Particularly when one who has been lost through some unkindness or unpleasant situation in the Church is won back through fervent prayer, kindly admonition, personal appeal, we taste the joy of success. Jas. 5, 20.

The sinner found becomes a saint, past transgressions blotted out for Jesus' sake. As long as faith and repentance endures, God daily forgives him his trespasses. Oh, let us rejoice over every precious, blood-bought soul that is found through the blessed ministry of the Church! And as members of that great invisible company of saints which constitutes the Bride of Christ, let us help to maintain her diligent search for the lost and ourselves appreciate the loving instructions, warnings, gifts, and blessings with which she has surrounded us. WALTER F. TROEGER.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 6, 36—42.

The Bible teaches that salvation is by faith. It cannot be otherwise. Salvation is not something that has to be achieved by us. God has prepared it. It is offered to us and we are to believe, that is, to take it. When something is offered to you, then you do not have to produce it or earn it or make yourself worthy of it; the only thing needed is that you take it.

But the same Bible that emphasizes salvation by faith insists on love. In the remarkable discourse of Jesus called the Sermon on the Mount, from which our text is taken, he speaks at length of love. Listen to these well-known verses preceding our text: vv. 27—31.

Let no one of us think that Jesus is stressing love as a means by which we are to procure a place in heaven. Heaven, as we heard before, has been opened to us. We simply have to enter through faith. It is an altogether different reason why Jesus inculcates love toward our fellow-men. Love is the manifestation of gratitude on our part for the many good things that God has done for us. It is a means of declaring to the world that we are children of God, who is kind and loving. In love the faith dwelling in us finds a congenial sphere of activity, in which it can grow and flourish.

Our text speaks of brotherly love. We find here —

Two Applications of the Law of Brotherly Love.

1. *We are to be merciful toward the suffering and erring neighbor.*
2. *We are to think of our own faults before we undertake to correct the faults of a brother.*

1.

Mercy is stressed in our text. V. 36. Mercy is love in its relation to the suffering and distressed. It consists in a helpful attitude, issuing in real aid, if possible, toward those who are in need of our assistance. We think, in the first place, of those who suffer from some physical want, from lack of employment, of food, clothing, shelter, who are sick and need attention. Living in this land of opportunity and plenty, we perhaps have never felt the pangs of hunger or the anguish of parents when the last cent has been spent for bread and the children are clamoring for food, but none is in sight. Be ye therefore merciful, v. 36. Give, v. 38.

More poignant than physical suffering is the mental agony due to slanderous accusation. How much of this is not to be seen even in Christian circles. Suspicion falls on a man on account of an act which may be given a good or a bad interpretation. Somebody puts an evil construction on it, gossip carries the derogatory remark to others, and soon a good reputation is blasted. Judge not, v. 37.

Jesus certainly does not mean to forbid the judges of our courts to do their legitimate work, or parents to correct their children, or the Church to excommunicate such members as have become manifestly wicked. He did not preach revolution against divinely constituted authority. "Give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." What He does forbid and brand as contrary to God's will is the uncharitableness which, when a brother comes under suspicion, rather believes that which is evil than that which is good and will declare that he has sinned, without having heard him — the vicious practise of judging motives, of giving credence to gossipers' tales, to innuendos or hints directed against the character of a brother. Oh, how it hurts the innocent neighbor when he is maligned and slandered! Judge not; condemn not. V. 37.

Still more serious than physical and mental suffering is spiritual suffering, namely, the suffering caused by one's own sin. The Savior here, among other things, is pointing to the case where a brother commits a sin against us. Such a one is in need of mercy. He has offended against the holy Law of God, and if he has become aware of his wrong-doing and his conscience is aroused, then he is in a most pitiful condition, being harassed by the accusing voice in his bosom. What is to be done?

Forgive, v. 27. That is what mercy demands. How can you turn your back on your brother when he comes to you wretched, miserable, and asks for pardon? And even if he does not ask for pardon, will you entertain a grudge against him? Have pity on him and forgive him.

Jesus points to a great pattern for us with respect to mercy. V. 36. Our Father in heaven is merciful to us. He sees our needs

and supplies them. In our supreme need He sent His Son as our Substitute. Besides, think of the daily forgiveness which He grants us in the face of so many offenses. What an example for us to follow!

At the same time this course of our heavenly Father must be an inducement for us to show mercy. Can we, the children, afford to be hard-hearted when our Father in heaven is so kind? Can we refuse forgiveness to an erring brother when God forgives the mountains of iniquity that we are guilty of? Think of the parable of the unmerciful servant, Matt. 18, 23 ff.

In addition to all this, Jesus points out that mercy will receive a great reward from God's grace. Not indeed salvation, for that has been prepared for us by Christ, as we heard before. But God will give many good things here in time and hereafter in eternity to all that show mercy. His reward is abundant, v. 38, far exceeding in quality and quantity the little favors that we have shown our neighbor. God gives the Christian happiness. In distress He sweetens for him the bitter draught. He causes his fellow-Christians to love and respect him. Throughout eternity He will bless the Christian giver with precious rewards of His grace. Can we, then, refuse to show mercy?

2.

Another application of the commandment of love is that we think of our own faults before we undertake to correct the faults of our neighbor.

As we heard before, when our neighbor has sinned against us, we are to forgive him. V. 37. But more must be said on this head. Sin is a very grievous matter. It would be the greatest unkindness if, when seeing our neighbor travel a course of wrong-doing, we refused to warn him. It would be worse than seeing the neighbor's house on fire and refusing to inform and help him. Charity demands that we point out to our neighbor his wrong-doing and its dire consequences.

But while love impels us to tell our brother of his fault, it likewise urges us first to look at our own shortcomings. Love always insists that we be humble and not exalt ourselves over our neighbor. Love thy neighbor as thyself. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. 1 Cor. 13, 4.

Jesus warns against the proud, haughty attitude which criticises the fault of the neighbor without seeing one's own. How prone are we not to commit this very sin! The ancients illustrated this by saying that man is carrying two knapsacks, one on his chest, the other one on his back. In the one on his chest he puts the evil deeds that others do. In the one on his back, those that he himself commits. Thus he keeps the sins of others always before his eyes, but his own he dismisses from his thoughts.

Jesus castigates this attitude in a striking parable, vv. 41. 42. The mote in the brother's eye is small, yet we do not fail to detect it. The beam in our own eye is terrifically large, still we do not perceive it. There is a man who hears his brother making an uncharitable remark. How it jars him! But that he himself in his business is daily defrauding people, he tries to overlook.

Note the strong language of Jesus in v. 42. "Thou hypocrite!" The person in question poses as a champion of righteousness, and yet he will not touch the evil that he himself is guilty of.

The parable of the blind man, v. 39, has the same import. Think of the ridiculous spectacle when one blind person tries to lead another in a strange country full of ditches. The moral is, Before you try to correct somebody else's faults, be sure that you are not just as much in need of correction as he.

The same point is emphasized in the parable of the pupil and the teacher. V. 40. If you wish to teach your neighbor concerning his sin, then see to it that you yourself are not entangled in evildoing. A teacher cannot lead his pupil to heights loftier than those he occupies himself. Remember water does not rise higher than its source. The master can do no more than bring a pupil up to his own level. How ridiculous, therefore, if a man wishes to correct the faults of his brother and his own moral level is no higher than that of the sinning neighbor!

The corrective for such hypocritical dealing is brotherly love. Let us pray God that His Holy Spirit may ever grant us an abundant measure of love toward our neighbor, so that we may take the proper course when he is sinning. W. Arndt.

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 5, 1—11.

This was a decisive day in the life of Peter. If it had not been for what is here recorded, Peter might never have been heard from. He might have lived and died like thousands of others — unknown, unwept, unsung. But the occurrence here narrated changed the whole course of Peter's life and formed one link in a chain of events that made of Peter a man of renown here and gave him a place and a glory for all eternity in heaven. Dan. 12, 3.

It is important that we note such decisive events, for they occur in our lives as well. Even the world recognizes something of the significance of critical moments.

> There is a tide in the affairs of man
> Which, taken at the flood,
> Leads on to fortune.

True, worldly-minded people think only of opportunity for gain, money, influence, temporal advancement, glory. Christians, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, think of spiritual values, Matt. 16, 26, spiritual opportunities, visitations of God, Luke 19, 9; 10, 38—42. Oh, the sadness when such a moment, such a day of visitation, is not recognized! Luke 19, 42; Matt. 25, 1—13. Lest we foolishly miss such an opportunity, let us give attention to what we are told in this text.

The Elevation of Peter.

1. Peter was elevated from sinner to saint and from fisherman to a fisher of men.

a) Peter was a great sinner. He certainly spoke the truth when here in our text he said: "I am a sinful man." He had an impulsive nature and gave way to impulses without carefully considering their nature, whether good or bad. That is sin. His murderous act, Matt. 25, 51; his satanic rebuking of Jesus, Matt. 16, 23; his foolish self-confidence, Matt. 26, 35; his shameful lack of faith, Matt. 14, 31; his vainglorious self-seeking, Matt. 19, 27; Mark 9, 34; his disgraceful flight at the time when Jesus was taken prisoner in Gethsemane, and his appalling sins of denial, lying, and perjury, Matt. 26, 72; his hypocritical dissembling, Gal. 2, 13. 14, — what a humiliating catalog of sins! And these are only the sins which have been recorded here, the outbursts of a weak and corrupt nature. How often did Peter sin before and after this without having his transgressions actually recorded? Peter certainly told the truth when he said: "I am a sinful man."

And Peter was an uneducated and ignorant man, Acts 4, 13. He had not received such an education as Paul, for instance. He had been brought up to live the life of a plain, simple tradesman. He followed the business of supplying neighboring cities with fish from the sea of Galilee or Tiberias (Gennesaret). There have been thousands of weak, sinful, ignorant men plying this trade of fishermen of whom we have never heard.

b) But Peter was not left in his sin, ignorance, and humble station, but was made a saint, a writer of great power, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, who is known and esteemed throughout the entire Christian world and will shine as the brightness of the firmament throughout all eternity in the glory of the Messiah's kingdom.

Peter's sins were all washed away and forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 John 1, 7. He tells us of that precious blood in his first epistle, chap. 1, 18. 19. Through repentance, Matt. 26, 75, through faith, this very sinful man was cleansed and pardoned and made a saint in the sight of God.

And not only was he forgiven, but there came into His heart God's Holy Spirit, who transformed his nature. He became a new

creature. 2 Cor. 5, 17. Instead of his ignorance there was given him the very wisdom of God, the revelation from the heavenly Father. Matt. 16, 17. Instead of his cowardice there was given him wonderful boldness to confess the Lord, Acts 4, 8—13, cheerful willingness to suffer for the sake of Jesus' name, Acts 5, 41. To the grace of God which is bestowed upon every believer there were added in Peter's case many graces, much spiritual power. Not only did he become a follower and disciple of the Lord Jesus, but Jesus made of him a fisher of men, made him a preacher of the Gospel and an apostle. What marvelous success Peter had in this great and glorious work! Pentecost Day, Acts 2; Cornelius, Acts 10. The two epistles of Peter. Some have even wished to make of him a successor of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas Jesus Christ has no successor. He ever liveth. Among His disciples none is lord, but all are brethren. Matt. 23, 8. Nor is there any need to raise Peter higher than Jesus raised him when He gave him the commission to feed His sheep and to feed His lambs. John 21, 15—17.

Is that not a wonderful elevation, transformation, in the life of this sinful man? How poor he was; how rich he became! How unclean and filthy he was; how pure and strong he became! How helpless, fearful, and cowardly he was; what a preacher of power, what a shining light, God made of him!

But this sermon is not preached for Peter's sake. That Same One who elevated Peter can elevate you. And He is ready to do it. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear." Is. 59, 1. That Fountain from which Peter drank and survived is still flowing, and you are invited to drink from it. The dress of righteousness which covered Peter's sin is also to cover your sin. The hand that was outstretched to lift up Peter out of his sin and make a saint of him is outstretched to lift you up and to make a glorious saint of you. "Let us covet earnestly the best gifts." 1 Cor. 12, 31. Let it not be said of us that we have not because we ask not. No, let us seek that we may find; let us knock that the door may be opened to us; let us ask that we may receive. And in order that we may receive, let us now consider —

2. The means through which this elevation was accomplished.

a) It is very plain, and should be evident to every one, that *God* did this work in Peter. Peter's own natural craving did not move him to seek the Lord, nor did he find Jesus through his own natural wisdom or strength. No, Jesus came to Peter. Here in our text we are told of Jesus' coming to Peter while Peter was washing his nets, and in John 1 we are told that Peter's brother, Andrew, brought Simon Peter to Jesus. But it was not this mere external contact with Jesus that produced the change in Peter. What was it? It was Jesus' Word. Even before the occurrence which is here narrated Jesus had

convinced Peter that He, Jesus, is the Messiah, the Christ. John 1, 40—42. It was just as true in Peter's case as it is true in the case of any one that a man cannot come to faith in Christ if he does not hear of Him. Rom. 10, 14—17. In Peter's case, as in the case of every one who is blessed of God with repentance and faith, the seed is the Word of God. Luke 8, 11. Peter himself knew that and taught it. 1 Pet. 1, 23.

The importance of this fact can scarcely be overestimated. No man can be saved without the Word of God. Luke 16, 31. If you are waiting for God to use some other means upon you in order to convince you and bring you to Christ, to repentance of sin, to faith, you are waiting in vain. To-day His mercy calls you, to-day the same Word that was preached to Peter is preached to you. To-day, as you hear God's Word, salvation is come to the door of your heart. Luke 19, 9; Rev. 3, 20. (Hymn 48.)

b) But it would be a great mistake to imagine that any one word or sermon of Jesus, once heard, did all that we see in Peter. It is true that here in our text Peter was so influenced by the sermon which Jesus preached, v. 3, that in spite of the inconvenience, difficulty, and apparent impossibility of success he was willing to launch out into the deep and to let down his net for a draught, *"at the word of Jesus."* V. 5. But Peter became an earnest disciple, that is, scholar, of Jesus' Word. He now walked with Him, heard Him day by day, accepted instruction, admonition, correction, reproof, and guidance from this his beloved Master. And thus the work in Peter was continued and increased, and all those marvelous things were done for Peter of which we have spoken. Through the Word, Peter was made to see his sin; through the Word he was given repentance; through the Word, faith; through the Word, the Holy Spirit; through the Word, courage, perseverance, guidance. Oh, what marvels the Word of God wrought for Peter! And through this Word Peter himself again regenerated others and saved them from their sins and made of them heirs of salvation, kings and priests under God. Acts 2, 41; 1 Pet. 1, 23—25.

Now, my dear hearer, this Word has not lost its power, this Word was not given for Peter only. It is true, God does not intend to make every one of us an apostle or a preacher, but it is His purpose through God's Word to enlighten you, make a Christian of you, preserve you in the true faith, and give you victory over death itself. 1 Cor. 15, 55—57. God wants to make of you also fishers of men, through whose private testimony and through whose combined support of the Church, Christian schools, and Christian literature many are to come to the knowledge of the truth and thus will be taken in the net of the Gospel. Do you not see the importance of the Word of God for you? Did Peter lose anything by taking time to stop his

work and listen to Jesus' Word? Did Peter lose anything by lending his ship to Jesus for the purpose of a divine service there at the seashore? Did Peter lose anything by forsaking everything and following Jesus? No, Peter discovered that David was right. Ps. 19, 10. Solomon prayed aright. 1 Kings 3, 9. Family devotion. Public worship. Christian literature. (Hymn 117.) S.

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 5, 20—26.

(Cf. *Hom. Mag.*, 13, 250.)

There are people who contend that Christ preached nothing but the Gospel. But what are they going to make of such passages as these: Luke 12, 15; John 8, 44; Matt. 22, 36—40, and much of the Sermon on the Mount? Here Christ evidently preached the Law. And why should He not? The Law of God is holy, just, and good. It is the perfect will of God, the will Christ came to do. No one can deny that Christ was made under the Law, Gal. 4, 4; that He lived in perfect obedience to the Law, John 8, 46; Matt. 17, 5; 1 Pet. 2, 21—23; and that He vicariously bore the curse of the Law, Gal. 3, 13. 14.

But this manifold relationship to the Law does not warrant the statement made by others that Christ was a new Lawgiver. What did Christ add to the Law, or what did He take away? Nothing. He did not even advocate a single revision of the Law, but declared it to be unchangeable. Matt. 5, 17—19.

In our text we find Christ preaching the Law, revealing its true meaning, and brushing away the human rubbish which men, like the scribes and Pharisees, had heaped upon it. Let us sit at His feet, as His disciples did then, and hear His instruction on —

The Threefold Purpose of the Law.

1. The first purpose of the Law is to curb, or check, in a measure, the coarse outbursts of sin and thereby help to maintain outward discipline and decency in the world.

Christ speaks of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness consisted in an outward, formal, and perfunctory observance of the Law. No Jewish court could accuse them of having killed their neighbor. Their score was clean in this respect, and they were careful to keep it clean.

What induced the scribes and Pharisees to live thus? The fear of being dragged into court, imprisoned, and disgraced in the eyes of the people. How could they, the paragons of piety, righteousness, and holiness, afford to lower themselves in the sight of the common rabble? What would their fellow-scribes and -Pharisees think of

them if they became lawbreakers? The command "Thou shalt not kill," the fear of punishment, and the bars of the prison checked and curbed their hands from the actual shedding of blood.

Christ does not condemn the scribes and Pharisees for their outward conformity with the Law. He does not say: "Whosoever shall kill shall *not* be in danger of the judgment." He lets the Law stand and puts His seal on it, saying: "Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."

What the Law of God did then it still does to-day, checking the coarse outbursts of sin and helping to maintain outward discipline and decency in the world. For that purpose it has been placed in the statute books of the nations; for that purpose it was written in the heart of man, whose conscience bears witness to the fact that killing exposes to punishment. Many a murderer has given himself up because his conscience gave him no rest night or day.

Furthermore, in order that the Law may serve as a curb, God gave the sword into the hands of the government, His minister, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Many a person has been held back from committing murder because he feared to entangle himself in the meshes of the law. The club of the policeman, the iron bars of the penitentiary, the noose of the gallows, and the current of the electric chair help to remind men of God's commandment "Thou shalt not kill," and to stem the tide of lawlessness, the coarse outbursts of sin.

Then, if the Law of God acts as a curb to the anarchist and the ungodly, what a shame is it that those who claim to be Christians do not abstain from all violations of the law, but are found among the lawbreakers! Truly, their righteousness is not better, but worse, than that of the scribes and Pharisees.

2. The second purpose of the Law is that it also act as a mirror, teaching man a due knowledge of his sin.

If a man regards the mere outward observance of the Law as its complete fulfilment, he has either not seen himself in the mirror of the Law, or he has forgotten what manner of man he was when the mirror of the Law was held before him. This was the case with the scribes and Pharisees, for they imagined they had met all the requirements of the Law by abstaining from the forbidden deed, for instance, from actual murder. How could they be children of wrath or in danger of hell-fire? Was there anything lacking in their conduct? Christ points out that the Law forbids sinful thoughts and words and not only sinful deeds. Vv. 20—22. Cf. Matt. 15, 19; Jer. 17, 5.

We need the preaching of the Law in order that we may see ourselves not only as others see us, but as God sees us. When we take a real look at ourselves in the mirror of the Law, we find nothing

in the nature of compliments or congratulations, but everything to bring the blush of shame upon us. — About six years ago the newspapers of Cincinnati told about a poorly dressed woman who went to Dr. George Herman, asking him to make an X-ray examination of her heart free of cost. She said she was very poor and couldn't pay. The doctor consented to do the work. But when he turned his machine a little below the heart, he saw a concealed pocket in which was a purse with five twenty-dollar gold pieces. "Your heart is very bad," he said; "you lied when you said you were poor." — The Law is an X-ray, which penetrates the darkest recesses of our heart and reveals the evil thoughts and desires that are lurking there. — A mother took her little daughter to church and listened while the minister preached a very earnest sermon against sin, trying to bring the subject home to his hearers. The little girl listened with wide-open eyes, and suddenly turning to her mother in great distress, she whispered, "Mama, he means us!" The Law points to each one of us, saying, "Thou art the man!" It punctures all the inflated opinions in regard to our good character and conduct, until we realize that our righteousnesses are but filthy rags and that we deserve nothing but wrath and condemnation. It helps to keep us humble and prepares the way for the Gospel-message, wherein we are told that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth; for He was made sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," etc.

An old man once said that it took him forty years to learn three simple things: first, that he could not do anything to save himself; secondly, that God did not expect this of him; thirdly, that Christ had done it all for him. Knowing these things, the grateful child of God says with Paul: "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."

3. The Law serves as a rule in all walks of life, leading the regenerate to know what are truly good works.

A good work in God's sight is whatever a child of God does, speaks, or thinks, in faith, according to the Ten Commandments, for the glory of God and the benefit of his neighbor. The Law of God is holy, and it teaches us how to live a holy life. It tells us to love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. As an expression of our love to God we are to bring our gifts to the altar. As an expression of our love to our neighbor we are to be reconciled to him, carefully keeping watch over our thoughts, words, and deeds, lest our Old Adam, whom we still carry about us, mislead us to hasty words and deeds, displeasing to God and harmful to our neighbor. Cf. Matt. 15, 9; John 15, 5.

The Law sets such a high standard that, no matter how we try, we cannot attain perfection. But as often as we find that we have departed from the rule of God's Law, let us go to Christ, who kept the Law for us, confess our sins, ask Him to forgive them, and in the strength of that forgiveness again walk the way of His commandments with rejoicing. Phil. 3, 12; Ps. 119, 9.

W. M. CZAMANSKE.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 8, 1—9.

(Cf. *Hom. Mag.*, 13, 250.)

Adapted from Stoeckhardt's *Gnade um Gnade*, p. 400.

Compassion touched the heart of Jesus when He beheld the multitudes who were like a flock of sheep without a shepherd to feed them. The multitudes had tarried with Him in the desert for three days, and their supply of food had been exhausted long ago. What if He sent them home and they should faint by the way? No, His compassionate heart could not permit such a thing to happen. He thought of what the prophet Isaiah had written concerning the Son of Man: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," etc. But how was He to feed them with only a few barley loaves and fishes?

Power came to the aid of compassion, and the loving heart influenced the mighty hands to prepare a table in the wilderness, where the hungry were filled with good things and all their needs were supplied.

In our text Jesus not only solved the bread problem that troubled His disciples then, but He also gives us a number of hints to help us solve our bread problem to-day.

1. The first thing we are to remember in regard to our bread problem is that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God, *i. e.*, the Gospel of Christ. You may not be able to find such a hint in the text before you, and yet it is there. We admit that St. Mark merely records the fact that the multitudes had continued for three days in the wilderness with Christ. St. Matthew, who also records this miracle, tells us that these three days were filled with the preaching of the Gospel and with healings of all manner of infirmities. That was Jesus' custom elsewhere, and that was His custom here. First came the Bread of Life to nourish the soul, and then came the lesser gift, the bread to nourish the body.

This order of things which Christ observed contains a lesson very often forgotten. Esau forgot it when he despised his birthright and sold it for a mess of pottage. Elimelech forgot it when he looked across the borders of Israel into the land of Moab, thinking only

about food for the body, for himself, for his family, and for his herds. He tried to solve his bread problem by leaving the House of Bread (Bethlehem) and the true worship of God for a season, never considering the dangers of idolatry, to which he exposed himself and his family. Cp. Book of Ruth.

The prophet Amos has a word of warning to those who do not seek the kingdom of God first. Amos 8, 11. 12. And Christ says: "What is a man profited," etc.? Matt. 16, 26.

How much time and attention is given to supply the body with bread! Is it asking too much to give the soul the same amount of time and attention? You are not too busy to eat; why, then, too busy to read and hear the Word of God, the Bread and Water of Life? "Come, buy and eat." "Come, taste and see." "Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

2. Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed the bread before He gave it to His disciples. He prayed and gave thanks to God for the gift of bread. Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." His eyes turned to the Giver; why not ours? His lips thanked the Giver; why not ours? Luther points out: "God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to all the wicked; but we pray . . . that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."

Christ said grace before the multitudes, in public and in private. Should His disciples be ashamed of doing what He taught them to do? The heathen do not say grace at table. The time spent by Christians who really pray is not wasted. Their table prayers help to solve their bread problem. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest," etc. "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc.

3. Prayer does not make our work superfluous. Without prayer we steal our bread from God; without work we steal our bread from man.

The Lord did not interpose His power every time His disciples or the multitudes were hungry. Twice He fed the multitudes to prove His power, to confirm their faith in His saving Word; but He did not encourage them to expect miracles as the self-evident way by which they were to live. He asked His disciples, "How many loaves have ye?" He took the seven loaves that were the result of human labor, of sowing, reaping, grinding, kneading, and baking and thereby put His stamp of approval on all honest labor. In the sweat of our brow and with our brain we are to earn our living. Adam worked; Moses worked; Christ was a carpenter; St. Paul, a tentmaker. Dorcas, Lydia, etc.

We are not to lay our hands in our lap and expect God to rain manna from heaven for our special benefit and as a reward for our laziness. 2 Thess. 3, 10—12. Nor are we to look at our calling as if it were beneath us and unworthy of our best efforts. Luke 16, 3.

4. But if there is a shortage, even with our best efforts, let us not despair, but put our trust in God and cast our cares on Him.

The multitudes in the desert were at the point of fainting. Such things may happen to people to-day who follow Jesus and love to hear His Word, while others who turn their back on Him live in luxury and have more than heart could wish. Many children of God have been troubled at the prosperity of the wicked. Ps. 73. Perhaps they are being fattened like oxen for the slaughter. Consider their end. "If I had joined this order and that society, I might be better off to-day." — Well, barley bread with a common lunch is better than a feast with a Christless bunch.

We do not hear that any one among the multitudes who followed Christ out into the wilderness starved to death. Jesus took care of all who were there, even of the women and children. God will take care of you. His goodness is new every morning and His faithfulness every night. He clothes the lilies of the field. He feeds the young ravens. Are ye not much better than they? Rom. 8, 32.

5. Another point in our text not to be overlooked is the fact that Christ advocated the practise of economy with the means at our command. He ordered the fragments to be taken up. We are to work and save that we may have to give to him that needeth. The Lord gave the bread and fishes to His disciples, the disciples to the multitudes. "To do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Christ communicated from a small store. If God has prospered you with a big store, give accordingly. The Christians at Antioch had bread for the Christians at Jerusalem. "Distribute to the necessity of the saints."

For we must share if we would keep
That good thing from above;
Ceasing to give, we cease to have —
Such is the law of love. (R. C. TRENCH.)

W. M. CZAMANSKE.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 7, 15—23.

There is an old Latin proverb which reads, *Vox populi, vox Dei,* meaning, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." Is that saying true, or is it false? Jesus says it is false. He contradicts the idea that, when you are popular with men, you are popular with God. Jesus calls popularity a cursed thing, for He distinctly says: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6, 26.

False prophets have always been popular with the great masses

of the people. They have been, and still are, held in high estimation by the crowd. Is the crowd's voice God's voice, or is the true prophet's voice God's voice? Sacred history ought to furnish us with the correct answer to this question.

Let us begin with Enoch, the seventh from Adam. The sacred record does not only say that Enoch walked with God, — which in itself is a significant thing in that ungodly age, — but it also says that Enoch reproved the ungodly masses for their ungodly deeds, their hard speeches and great swelling words, because they had more respect of persons than of God. Their hard speeches were undoubtedly directed against Enoch, who took them to task for their false teachings and their ungodly life. We can safely say that Enoch was not popular with the masses, since we know that he was popular with God. "He pleased God." Cf. Heb. 11, 5. 6; Jude 14. 15.

There were false prophets in the days of Noah, who denied the fact proclaimed by Noah that God would bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh. The masses liked the false prophets who said, Let us eat and drink, marry and give in marriage, for there never will be a flood, not in one hundred and twenty years nor in a thousand years. Noah lifted a solitary protest against the life of the world and stood there a solitary figure against a multitude. We can imagine how unpopular Noah was with the masses during the time when the ark was being prepared, by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Not the voice of the people, but Noah's voice was God's voice; for the flood came, and the masses with the false prophets, who misled them, were destroyed. Cf. Gen. 6 and 7; Luke 17, 26. 27; Heb. 11, 7.

Lot, the nephew of Abraham, is usually regarded as a rather weak child of God, but one thing must be said about him: He bore witness of the true God in the city of Sodom. Peter calls Lot "that righteous man" and says that he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked and with their unlawful deeds. What Lot saw and heard from day to day vexed his righteous soul. Cf. 2 Pet. 2, 7. 8. "Heard" from the false prophets of the people.

Lot rebuked the Sodomites for their wickedness. This fact becomes evident from Gen. 19, 9: "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." They did not like his reproof, his preaching of righteousness, because in it they were confronted with the word and the will of God. Loving darkness, they hated the light, because their works were evil. Lot begged them not to do so wickedly, to desist from pandering to their sinful lusts, but all to no avail. Nor did he fare any better with his sons-in-law, to whom the prediction that the city was to be destroyed seemed like a mockery. And when the city was destroyed, was the voice of the people the voice of God?

Moses was a true prophet of God who admonished his people to walk in the ways of the Lord. Again and again the people rebelled against him, thinking that he was too strict. When he went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from the hand of God, Moses left the people in charge of his brother Aaron. It did not take the Israelites long to find out that they had an easy-going leader, whose main ambition was to be popular with the masses.

When Moses delayed to return and the people clamored for a god they could see, Aaron ordered them to bring their gold and made a golden calf for them. We need not read between the lines to know that Aaron was the hero of the day, the most popular man in the camp. Moses was practically forgotten. How glad the people were that he did not come back to spoil the eating and drinking and the dancing! Aaron followed the voice of the people. Was it the voice of God? No; Aaron played the false prophet.

The prophets of Baal were popular in the days of Elijah. The masses, with the exception of the seven thousand, bowed the knee to Baal. Their prophets ate at Jezebel's table and were honored by the king, while Elijah was regarded as an outcast and a fugitive. Was the voice of the people the voice of God? Cf. 1 Kings 18, 25—31.

The Sadducees in Christ's day, who occupied the chief places in the Jewish Church, were popular with the people. Their motto was: Let us eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow we may be dead. Plucking the roses while they are in bloom was a very comfortable creed, very pleasing to the sinful flesh, and the crowds took to it like ducks take to water. But when Christ exposed these false prophets, saying, "Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees," He touched a hornets' nest that buzzed with hatred and revenge. Furthermore, when Christ pointed out that the Pharisees were teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, both classes joined hands to rid themselves of this Teacher come from God. Arrayed in the sheep's clothing of innocence, they tempted Him with intriguing questions in order that they might have a cause against Him sufficient to satisfy their wolfish nature. At last they succeeded, and the voice of the people prevailed, crying, "Crucify Him!" Was the voice of the people the voice of God?

St. Paul, who preached Christ Crucified, had to listen to the roaring masses at Ephesus, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," the Diana "whom all Asia and the world worshipeth." Was that voice to him the voice of God?

Martin Luther said of his time: "Sectarianism is rampant, and few there are who contend against it and preserve the true doctrine; their names could all be written on a little card." Think of that stupendous scene where a lonely monk faced the combined powers of Church and State. The central doctrine of Scripture, *justification*

by faith, without the deeds of the Law, was regarded as an insult to the wisdom of men. Fearing to be ridiculed by the classes and hissed by the masses, Erasmus and others preferred to be popular and to let truth take care of itself. They forgot what others have forgotten since that day: "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." Ex. 23, 2.

Christ couples popularity with falseness. Then unpopularity must be due to the proclamation of the truth. Christ warns all His disciples against false prophets. So do the apostles. This warning is still necessary because false doctrine always coincides with man's depraved reason, appeals to the Old Adam, and tickles his vanity. Mr. Seton Thompson, who spent years in watching the lives of wild animals, declares that the instinct of danger which some of them possess is so extraordinary that it really seems as if there must be an angel who warns and protects them. Defended by this instinct only, they will not touch the poisonous grasses, and unerringly they avoid the presence of their foes. But men are not like that. They open their doors and their hearts to false prophets, who hide the hook of falsehood with a bait of truth. Cf. 2 Tim. 3, 5. There is hardly a person in the world so mean as to lie to another in answer to a question about the right road to the next town. But how many folks mislead others about the right road to heaven! Popular or not, let us keep on doing our duty warning against error as the servants of Christ. Cf. Gal. 1, 10. W. M. Czamanske.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 16, 1—9.

There is more in Holy Scripture regarding Christian stewardship than most people imagine. Its principles are well defined, its meaning is clearly stated, and its blessings to those who recognize the trust conferred upon them are beyond all that we could ask or think.

Our text gives us a fine opportunity to discuss in all its angles the subject of

Christian Stewardship.

1. The basic fact of Christian stewardship is God's ownership.

As the level of the sea is the base-line adopted for the measurement of altitudes, so the truth that God is the Owner of all things is the base-line from which to measure the meaning of Christian stewardship.

From the first pages of the Bible to the last God is acknowledged as the Creator, Preserver, and Owner of all things. Man was told to have dominion over the beasts of the field, over the fowls of the air, etc.; but nowhere do we read that God made him owner of all

the earth, not even of the Garden of Eden. Adam was to dress and keep it, to farm it for the Lord. To impress upon Adam's mind that God really owned the garden, notice the restriction in regard to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam failed to remember the basic fact of God's ownership, and God dispossessed him.

If God never deeded over to Adam a single foot of ground, did you ever read that any of Adam's sons or daughters fared any better? Ps. 24, 1; Deut. 10, 14; 1 Chron. 29, 10—16.

Will the average thinking man admit the truth of God's ownership? No; natural man hates to give God credit for anything. Evolution, in its logical conclusions, disowns and dethrones God and makes man his own creator, with no obligations toward God. But in spite of all that men may say, not even the scientific superman of to-day has originated a new force or created a single new element. Unless you can show up a quit-claim deed, countersigned by God Himself, your house, your land, your money, your body and soul, belong to God. Deut. 8, 17; Hag. 2, 8; Jas. 1, 17; 1 Cor. 6, 19. 20.

Furthermore, there is a vital relation between salvation by grace and God's ownership. As long as man believes he owns anything, he may think that he has something to give to God as a covering for his sins. Only the man who profoundly feels that God is the Owner of everything can honestly and humbly pray: "Nothing in my hands I bring," etc. (The Christian believes the Second and the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed.)

2. Christian stewardship involves the acknowledgment of responsibility. It is the recognition of a trust conferred.

Tracing the word "steward" back to its original is an interesting study in itself. In the old Anglo-Saxon the word "steward" meant a ward, or guard, of a sty. Later a steward was chief overseer of his master's property and the caretaker of his master's legal business. But stewardhip was in existence long before the English language was spoken. Cf. Gen. 24, 2; 39, 1—6; Titus 1, 7; 1 Pet. 4, 10; Matt. 24, 45. Stewardship, therefore, is something to which we must measure up, a sacred trust, a position of responsibility. Yea, all life is a stewardship, so much capital, so many talents placed into our hands for the best possible investment.

In spite of handicaps, see what has been accomplished. St. Paul's thorn in the flesh; David Livingstone's crushed arm; John Milton's blindness; Luther's illness; Ex-President Theodore Roosevelt, once a frail and asthmatic youth; Roger W. Babson climbed from an invalid's chair to the eminent position of a master statistician; Helen Keller, etc.

We are to train our mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual faculties. Edison, Marconi, John Sebastian Bach, Paul Gerhardt, etc.

It is required of a steward that he be found faithful. "No man liveth unto himself." What is your contribution toward your neighbor's betterment? Have you helped to enrich his faith, love, and hope? Give an account of your stewardship. See text.

3. The systematic exercise of Christian stewardship.

There is more said in the Bible about giving than about praying. Some one has made the remark that St. Paul is forever passing the collection plate. He at least furnishes us with more texts on giving than all the other apostles put together. He was a practical man, who knew the connection between doctrine and duty, between creed and deed. His silver rule, 1 Cor. 16, 1. 2, tells us that our giving is to be personal, systematic, and proportionate. His rule is in full accord with what the Bible says elsewhere about giving. Cain and Abel's offerings. Abraham and Jacob gave a tenth unto the Lord, although there is no mention of such a law. Even the pagans of antiquity set aside a definite amount for their gods.

When the Hebrews became a nation, they not only paid a tenth toward the support of the tribe of Levi, the priesthood, Num. 18, 21—29, but also for the maintenance of the feasts, Deut. 14, 22. 23. Besides this there were trespass and free-will offerings, amounting in all to no small sum. God surely put system into their giving. When the Jews did not live up to their obligations, the Lord called them to task for it. Mal. 3, 8. 9.

Jesus recognized the law of tithes, reproving the Jews not for what they did, but for what they left undone. Matt. 23, 23. He did not criticize Zacchaeus for giving 50 per cent. nor the poor widow for giving 100 per cent.

Granted that the law of tithes is abrogated, does the Christian owe God nothing? With more blessings under the Gospel, the Christian ought to go the Jew one better. If you are afraid of being regarded as a ceremonialist, make it 11 per cent. or 15 per cent., the amount our Government exempts for religious and charitable purposes when you make out your income tax. This suggests a standard and may be used as a spring-board into the boundless ocean of liberality.

4. The impelling motive — gratitude for the mercies of God.

God's commands ought to induce the Christian to give. Heb. 13, 16; Prov. 3, 9; 1 Tim. 6, 18; Ps. 76, 11; 2 Cor. 9, 7; Luke 16, 9; Matt. 22, 21; etc. Or do we want to be classified with Judas, with Ananias and Sapphira?

God's example ought to move us to give. Point out His giving as recorded in the Three Articles of the Apostles' Creed. Gratitude for the mercies of God: Rom. 12, 1—8; 2 Cor. 8, 9; 9, 15.

5. The blessings vouchsafed to great givers.

Abraham was made rich; David and Solomon were blessed. The apostles left their fishing-nets and the toll-booth and lacked nothing. St. Paul says: "I have all and abound." Phil. 4, 18. Cf. Luke 6, 38; Matt. 6, 33; 2 Cor. 9, 6; Acts 20, 35. See Dallmann's *Christian Giving* for modern examples, such as William Colgate, etc.

Our mission-work is hampered, the treasuries of our Synod and of our congregation are like old Mother Hubbard's cupboard, our missionaries and ministers are underpaid, because the members of our churches are afraid that God will not keep His promises vouchsafed to great givers. Shall we doubt Him any longer or trust that He will make His promises come true? Mal. 3, 10.

W. M. Czamanske.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 19, 41—49.

"God made the country, but man made the town." So wrote the poet Cowper many years ago. There is a kernel of truth in these well-known lines, a truth that comes home to us with added emphasis when we consider that Christ singled out the towns and cities in which most of His mighty works were done and pronounced His woe upon them. Cf. Matt. 11, 20—24.

There is no denying that these Galilean towns and cities were highly privileged, Capernaum especially, being Christ's own city after He had left Nazareth. Here He performed many miracles. Here was the home of Peter and Andrew, of James and John, and of Matthew, the publican. So the name of Jesus and the gracious words that came from His lips must have filled every nook and corner, every house and hut, of the city, compelling even the most careless to consider His offer of life and salvation.

Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and here was a greater than Jonah. But these Galilean cities refused to repent. So Jesus prophesied their destruction, a prophecy literally fulfilled. Capernaum, in particular, has occasioned much trouble for the map-makers of the Holy Land, since two localities are still contending for the doubtful honor of having been the site of the city, and both are in ruins.

1.

Our text brings before us another city for which Jesus labored so long and so lovingly. I need not tell you that Jerusalem was proud of its name and busy with its profits and pleasures, so busy, in fact, that it had no eye for the King in His beauty and no ear for the Gospel He proclaimed. What Jesus did for Jerusalem and how Jerusalem repaid His loving-kindness with ingratitude presents one of the

most pathetic scenes recorded in history. Jerusalem, the city of a great king, should have welcomed the King of kings. But, instead, it refused to recognize Him. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. How would you feel if you came home some night after a hard day's work, tired and hungry and yearning for comfort and rest, and found that your own people heard your knock at the fast-closed door, and saw you standing there, and would not open it and let you in? "Ah," you say, "that is not a good illustration because such a thing could never happen to me." But it did happen to Jesus, and not only once, but again and again. Jerusalem did not want Him. He pleaded, and Jerusalem spurned Him. He knocked, and Jerusalem kept Him standing there.

When love is scorned and repulsed, it usually turns into hatred. But not so with Jesus. There is no anger or hatred in His eyes when He beholds Jerusalem. We see tears trickling down His cheeks. Yea, more, He cries aloud. What does it mean? Is there nothing in Jerusalem, its beauty of situation, its palaces, its Temple, to stop those tears from flowing and to fill His heart with joy? Has Jesus forgotten that first thrill of joy which filled His heart when, as a boy, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover? No; He has not forgotten this; but He has grown in wisdom and knowledge since that day. In His boyhood, Martin Luther looked upon Rome as a holy city, before he went there and investigated for himself. Luther found out that the "Holy City" had no right to bear that name. Neither did Jerusalem. Its holiness was nothing but sham. It reeked with rottenness. Jesus looked with other eyes than mere man looks upon the city in which he happens to live. Gifted with the eye of omniscience, Jesus saw more than the streets, the houses, and the people. He read their hearts and saw pride and selfishness, covetousness, and carnal security nestling there like a sleeping serpent, ready to spring at its next victim. He saw a Pharisee praying on the corner of a busy thoroughfare and then sneaking off to some poorer section of the town to rob a widow of her house and home. He saw a rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, refuse to give a beggar of the crumbs that fell from his table. And He saw a woman, caught in the act of adultery, dragged into court by men who were as guilty as she. Yea, that was not all. Jerusalem's worst sin was its unbelief, its refusal to consider the things that make for peace. He saw the city that had been exalted sinking to its certain doom, rushing headlong into eternal disaster. Refusing the help of God, it was destroying itself. Jerusalem's day of grace was drawing to a close. Was all His labor to be in vain? He had called them, but they would not come. No wonder the Savior weeps. Cf. Luke 13, 34; 2 Sam. 18, 33.

Jesus weeping over Jerusalem justifies our interest in cities, our sympathy for the spiritual welfare of the masses huddled together in

the centers of population. Surely there are sinners in the country as well as in the cities. There are individuals there as well as here who refuse to consider the things that belong to their peace. But where sinners are packed together and the association of evil companions is so easy, there is bound to be more opportunity for organized opposition to the Gospel and more danger of one dragging the other down to destruction. The fact that we meet with opposition in the city is no reason why we should not attempt to reach those whom we can reach. We may not be able to stop the mad rush to the roadhouse with its booze parties; but we should do our duty to keep worldliness out of the house of God.

2.

Jesus wept over the stubbornness of Jerusalem's unbelief, but He did not stop there. We are not only told how He felt, but also how He acted. Going into the Temple, He found it filled with the most shameful abominations. He saw His Father's house profaned and at once drove out the intruders, saying, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

The Church as it is constituted to-day still needs a house-cleaning. William Wordsworth truly says: —

> **The world is too much with us; late and soon,**
> **Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.**

If the Church is to exercise the power Christ has given unto her, she must rid herself of all those who try to make gain out of godliness. She must discipline her worldly-minded members according to the word of the Lord: "Let judgment begin at the house of God." Notice that our Lord justifies His cleansing of the Temple by a text of Scripture. All reformation of abuses in the Church must be brought about by means of God's Word.

Furthermore, let us not overlook the fact that Jesus made use of the Temple as a pulpit. With hundreds coming in and going out, He utilized the opportunity to plead with them not to neglect the time of their visitation. He tried to pluck them as a brand from the burning. He desired to gather Jerusalem's children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. He proclaimed the Word, the Gospel of John 3, 16, which alone is able to save men's souls, the Word that can save the people in the city just as it is able to save people in the country, if we will only teach it as faithfully as Jesus did, yea, and adorn the Gospel by a life that reflects its glory.

At one time when Alexander the Great laid siege to a city, he had a great lamp set up and kept it burning night and day as a signal to the besieged. He sent word to the people in the city that as long as the lamp burned they had time to save themselves by surrender. But when once the light was put out, the city and all that were in it would be destroyed without mercy.

God has set up His light, the Cross, and waits year after year, inviting men to come unto Him that they might have life and salvation. Will you exhaust His patience until it is too late? Remember what happened to Jerusalem! Redeem the time! Matt. 11, 28.

W. M. Czamanske.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 18, 9—14.

Two classes of people stand out very prominently during the earthly life of our Savior, Pharisees and publicans. The former claimed salvation as a right on two grounds: first, because they belonged to the chosen race, Abraham's seed; secondly, because they rigidly and minutely obeyed the precepts of a code of laws, many of them devised by themselves and their fathers. At the same time they harshly and unmercifully condemned all other people and even those of their own race who neglected rigidly to observe the ordinances and ritual of a law framed, in great measure, in the schools of their Rabbis. The publicans were tax-collectors of the Roman government, often exacting more than was appointed and therefore hated and despised as extortioners and servants of a hated foreign government, regarded as renegades of the religion of their fathers.

In the parable in our text Christ pictures to us a representative of these two classes as going up into the Temple to pray. The Pharisee, with his broad phylactery, his spiritual pride reflected in every feature of his countenance, goes with measured step into the sanctuary; he arranges his prayer-robe, looks around, his face darkening to a scowl as he observes the publican in a distant corner of the sacred building. And now he prays. No pleading for mercy and forgiveness of sin. Although addressing God, he is praying "with himself" rather than to God. His prayer is a self-gratified recital of his own piety. When he says, "God, I thank Thee," he is not thanking for grace that he has received, but he rather bids the Almighty join him in admiration of his virtues, on account of which he is lifted up above other men. Negatively and positively he exalts himself above others, ending in the contemptuous "even as this publican." With what satisfaction must highest Heaven regard one who fasted twice in the week and gave tithes of all he possessed!

And the other, the publican, takes his place far off, feeling his unworthiness in the presence of other worshipers; he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," realizing his sinfulness in the house of a holy and righteous God; "but smote upon his breast," thereby indicating how his sin pained him in his heart; and then his short, but all-expressive prayer, "God be merciful to me, *the* sinner."

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than

the other," this is the verdict Christ passes on both, the publican and the Pharisee. "Justified," according to Scripture, means "declared or pronounced" free from sin. The Pharisee, trusting in himself as being righteous, is abased; and the publican, humbling himself, realizing, acknowledging and confessing his sin, is declared righteous, justified. We shall confine ourselves to-day chiefly to —

The Publican's Justification.

1. His confession; *2. His absolution.*

1.

Let us look more closely at the picture Christ draws of the publican. He as well as the Pharisee went into the Temple to pray. The latter went there from custom and for self-gratification, while the publican was driven there by the feeling of his sinfulness and the longing for the forgiveness of his sins.

The picture of the publican drawn by the Savior shows how deep and how sincere his conviction of his sinfulness was.

"And the publican, standing afar off." He is in the house of God, the Holy and Righteous; and he is an unclean sinner. In the Temple of God, God's people meet; and he thinks he is unworthy of mingling with such an assembly.

"Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." The sinner, feeling his sin as guilt, is ashamed of his many misdeeds and regards himself as utterly unworthy to come into the presence of God.

"But smote upon his breast." There, in his heart, was the seat of his sinfulness; for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, etc. There was the pain he felt over his manifold transgressions.

"Saying, God be merciful to me, *the* sinner." Here, in seven brief words, we have the *confession* of the publican. How short and how expressive! We seem to look into his very heart.

He is in the house and presence of God, and he feels that he is alone with God, the holy God, and he a sinner, yea, *"the"* sinner (cf. the Greek). There is both self-consciousness and God-consciousness in him; but the former has been brought about by the latter, and this has been wrought by God's Holy Spirit. He has come to himself by coming to God. The Pharisee had no conviction of sin because he had not come to God; for his god was he himself, his pride, his own righteousness. The publican saw in himself nothing but his sin in the presence of God: how selfish, how grasping, how wicked, he had been; how he had offended a holy and righteous God.

Mark! No excuses for his sins in any form whatever! No mitigating, extenuating circumstances, such as greatness of temptation, lack of proper training and instruction. "Just as I am" — a sinner! Look at St. Paul's "of whom [sinners] I am chief."

He merely says "a sinner"; not a repentant sinner, a "praying"

sinner, a sinner that intends to mend his sinful life; not even a sinner that believes in Thee, O God; but only "a sinner."

But though feeling and acknowledging and confessing his sins, convinced of his utter unworthiness, the publican comes to God, comes to His house, comes to Him in prayer, appeals to Him for mercy, trusts in His mercy.

We have here in this picture of the publican, drawn by Christ Himself, a true description of what real repentance is, that change of heart and mind which is demanded of, and absolutely necessary to, all who wish to be saved. Without repentance, true and genuine, no forgiveness of sin, no heaven and salvation.

Alas! the publican's confession is often misquoted and misapplied by impenitent, careless sinners, who think that all that is necessary for salvation is mere repetition of the publican's prayer. True, every one, every sinner, that prays this petition as the publican did, is saved indeed; but it is an altogether different question whether all that say these few words, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," are saying them in the spirit of the publican. Let us take to heart the entire picture of the publican as drawn for us by Christ and pray to Him for the enlightenment of His Holy Spirit that He may teach this to us. For only those who speak this prayer as the publican did can apply the Savior's words to themselves: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified."

2.

The word *justify, justification,* occurs very often in the Bible. See especially Rom. 3, 28. 24; 4, 5; 5, 1; Gal. 2, 16. What is the meaning of this word in the Bible? It means to *declare or pronounce* free from sin, to declare just or righteous, not, as the Roman Church teaches, "make just or righteous." This can be clearly proved from our text.

We must mark well the emphatic declaration of the Savior: "I tell you" — I, the Savior and the Judge; He who was then about to give Him a ransom for sinful mankind and thus procure for all men forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation; He who later commanded that this be preached in all the world, that all sinners believing in Him should through faith in Him be justified. "I tell you," and My word shall stand forever; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

The question is often asked: "Can a believer be sure of the forgiveness of his sins?" We are not speaking here of careless sinners, asking this question from mere curiosity, but of honest, anxious souls. These earnest inquirers must be told: According to Holy Writ, Christ is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world; He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. This Gospel is to be preached to the whole world, to all sinful mankind, for the very pur-

pose that all should believe in Him and through faith in Him have forgiveness of sins.

What, therefore, is any one doing that doubts the forgiveness of sins? He plainly makes God a liar. For St. John writes, 1 John 5, 9. 10: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."

Assurance of the forgiveness of sins, therefore, rests, and must rest, entirely on the promises of God. These are clear and sure; for it is "a faithful [trustworthy] saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

All true and earnest Christians, therefore, can and should say with St. Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day," and: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

It is as a warning example that Christ has put the example of the Pharisee before our eyes. He trusted in his own righteousness, of which the prophet Isaiah says: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." This leaning on, and trusting in, our own righteousness, however, is deeply rooted in the human heart and must be regarded as the greatest obstacle in man's coming to Christ, as is shown us in the attitude of the Pharisees, which drew from Christ the scathing rebuke: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

In what light and with what contempt St. Paul, formerly himself a Pharisee, later on looked upon this righteousness, he tells us Phil. 3, 8. 9: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

May this be our faith and confession to our end: —

Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I stand
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

F. C. Verwiebe.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 7, 31—37.

In his sermon in the house of Cornelius, St. Peter said that Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil. Such was the life of our Savior in the days of His flesh. Our text pictures Him in this merciful activity "going about doing good." He had come from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where he had healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, and he now came back to the Sea of Galilee, passing through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis, a confederation of ten cities. There he healed a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, being unable to utter articulate words. These miracles of Christ teach us what a heart full of love and compassion He had towards suffering, sinful mankind. This we are to keep constantly before our eyes and in our hearts, so as to grow in our faith and trust in Him.

This story of the healing of the deaf-mute is one of the most touching in the gospels. It shows us human suffering and misery in one of its worst forms and, at the same time, our Lord's power and compassion. In our meditation on it we consider: —

1. The afflicted man; 2. The divine Helper;
3. The astonished multitude.

1.

Nothing touches our sympathy and compassion more than bodily misery and suffering. In this case the affliction was twofold. Two organs were virtually wanting, two senses sealed, two channels of communication with the outside world closed. How great is this double privation! How difficult for those whom God has blessed with the free use of all their bodily organs to appreciate the privation of one that is deaf and dumb! Hearing, like sight, is an inborn faculty; speaking man learns by hearing, but how can he learn without hearing? When the ear is stopped, silence seals the tongue.

What is the lot of these "children of silence," as they have been called? They are excluded from all those pleasures which the ear drinks in and the tongue gives out. They remain strangers to the melody of sweet sounds, the thrilling tones of harmony, the delights of music, the singing of birds, the thousand voices in the open air of heaven. Still more, they are excluded from the pleasant voice of childish prattle, from friendly intercourse and converse, from intellectual interchange of thought, from the sound of voices near and dear to them, of father and mother, brothers and sisters. From all this they are shut out. And here we come perhaps to the worst phase of their condition — the blank it leaves in the mind. The exclusion of sound is the exclusion of all that knowledge which sounds convey

and suggest to the mind. In some respects the condition of the deaf-mute is worse than that of the blind. Indeed, to the latter the fair face of nature is shrouded in darkness, their eyes are not gladdened by the light of the sun and by the starry heaven at night; so are hidden from them the beauty of the human countenance and the loveliness of the landscape scenery while "the shadow of death" rests upon their eyelids. Yet, you can read to him, and in modern times the blind are taught to learn to read by touch, the touch of their fingers. They are thus able to lay up a store of knowledge and be in communication with others. — Not so the deaf-mute. Though in recent times great efforts have been made and wonderful achievements attained in the improvement of the condition of deaf-mutes, still one of the great inlets of knowledge is taken away from him; one of the main sources of enjoyment is sealed to him; one of the chief links that bind men in social intercourse is snapped. The deaf-mute stands apart in lonely isolation from his fellow-men. Such a man was brought to the Lord, as it is here written: "They bring unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech."

2.

We are told in our text: "Jesus came unto the Sea of Galilee." He came to the place where this afflicted man was. How significant: Jesus came to those who needed help! He came down from heaven to earth because we needed such a Helper, such a Savior. He still comes to help, to those who need him.

How significant and instructive His way and His manner of healing! Compare other healings by the Savior; each one different. He is a wise Physician. He knows everybody's condition, disposition, and ailments, as well as how to treat each one. In this as well as in other cases He did not only want to heal the bodily ailments, but He also wished to arouse faith in the heart and thus bring about healing of body and soul.

For this purpose "He took him aside from the multitude." This was done to fix the patient's attention solely upon himself. How many are thus taken aside by the Savior in sickness, bereavement, losses! The affairs of this world bring about distraction and make us insensible to our eternal needs, which Jesus alone can supply. Therefore God "takes them aside."

After taking the deaf-mute aside, Jesus "put His fingers into his ears; and He spit and touched his tongue." By these signs He intended to make the patient sensible of his ailments; but they were also significant of what He was about to do. They did in no way contribute to the cure, as some have thought. They were to arrest the man's attention and to arouse his expectations. He knew nothing of the language of sounds, so the Lord addressed him by the language

of signs. He put His fingers into his ears in order to apprise him of the seat of his infirmity and to signify that he would open the way for sound to enter. He touched the tongue with moisture from His own mouth to loosen whatever impediment confined it. Thus these signs gave the man some indication of what He meant to do. But at the same time they were to teach him another lesson, the lesson of faith in our Lord Himself as the Source from which this healing power flowed.

But other and different symbolic actions followed these signs. The Savior turned His eyes to heaven. Why? He turns the mind of the deaf-mute from the signs, as though by themselves they were in any way bringing about his cure. He raises his thoughts to heaven, to remind him that all relief was to be looked for from thence, and that, as the Lord from heaven, He Himself had brought that power down to earth.

"He sighed"; and no wonder when He thought of the ruin sin had wrought. The Savior sighed when He looked abroad on suffering humanity, when He reflected on the misery of a fallen race, beholding at that hour an example of that misery in the afflicted man. He sighed in sympathy with our sufferings; for we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He sighed in sorrow for our sins. In them He saw the cause of all; in them He saw the fruitful source of so much woe; in them He saw the fearful thing that darkened heaven above us, opened hell beneath us, and cursed the earth on which we tread; in them He saw that terrible infection that has disordered all the members of the body and all the faculties of the soul; in them He saw all the ills that flesh is heir to (for by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and not only death, but with it all our woe); in them He saw the grievous load He was Himself to bear. He sighed when He thought of the works of the *devil* and his malice against man and how sin had given him power to deform the body by disease and ruin the image of the Creator in the soul of the creature. Perhaps, too, He sighed when, as some one has said, He saw the new temptation to sin for the man soon to be cured — the evil things the ears would hear, the idle things the tongue would speak, the wicked things in which both organs might be made instrumental.

"And said unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." One word only the Savior spoke, and no sooner was this spoken than a threefold miracle was wrought: "Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." How wonderful it must have been for the man when the sweet music of human voices penetrated his ear! He must have felt as though he was in a new world and that a new life had entered his soul. His tongue was freed

completely from whatever had fettered it, and his articulation was immediately perfect. He could now tell to all around the perfect nature of his cure, the joy that filled his soul, the gratitude that glowed in his heart and which then flowed from his lips.

Here we have the perfect Savior, able to save and willing to save, almighty love and compassion curing all ills and woe. He was indeed the promised Messiah, who had come into the world to destroy the works of Satan. No wonder the multitude was astonished beyond measure at the power shown by the Lord. About this only a few brief words.

3.

Astonished beyond measure, they said: "He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak."

We need not wonder at these words of the people and the powerful impression made on their minds. They had seen wonderful things. Blessed were indeed the eyes that saw such things, who saw not only outwardly the marvelous works of the Lord, but saw in them what John did when he says: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Well might they exclaim: "He hath done all things well." He had done well to the man who was healed because almost new life was given to him; He had done well to his family, for what a burden had he been to them until now! It was well for mankind that the Son of God came into the world to save and to heal. It was well for us; for these miracles of His prove that He is able and willing to help in all kinds of need and suffering.

Even here on earth, in this life, believers, when looking back over the Savior's dealings with them, are able to see how graciously He has led them in removing their maladies, restoring their souls, and they rejoice in His wisdom and love.

Review and count, if you can, the blessings which you have received. Ps. 103, 1. 2.

But what will it be in eternity when in the light of glory the Lord's ways and works with His believers here on earth will be made manifest to them; when in all His doings His wonderful power, wisdom, and love will be revealed to them; when all the riddles of our earthly pilgrimage will be solved and we shall clearly see how true it was that all things work together for good to them that love God! Then, indeed, all the multitude of ransomed saints will exclaim with blissful hearts and exulting voices: "He hath done all things well." Amen.

F. C. Verwiebe.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 10, 23—37.

"Blessed are the eyes . . . have not heard them." Thus spoke Christ to His disciples, calling them blessed because they saw His miracles and heard His words of eternal life, and it had been given to them to believe in Him as the promised Messiah, for whom so many of the fathers, prophets, and kings had waited. These words of the Savior were heard by a self-righteous lawyer, one well versed in the Law of Moses and in the traditions of the Rabbis, who was bent on establishing his own righteousness which is of the Law. He stood up and "tempted" the Savior, *i. e.*, he put Him to the test whether His views as to the manner of obtaining eternal life were in accord with the teaching of Moses, hoping to convict Him of some unorthodox statement.

But the catechizer is catechized. When Christ says: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" this is not to be understood as though it were possible for any one to keep the Law and by a perfect keeping of it to merit eternal life. This is against the plain teaching of Scripture; see Rom. 3, 28; Gal. 2, 16; 3, 10—12. Christ's coming on earth, His entire work of redemption, would have been unnecessary if man, by his own efforts, by the keeping of the Law, could gain and merit eternal life. Christ wanted to lead the lawyer to a true knowledge of his sinful condition. This can be done only by the Law, by a clear understanding of its spiritual nature and an earnest and honest effort to live according to it in thought, word, and deed. As St. Paul says: "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." None but those convinced and convicted by the Law as sinful and lost will feel the need of a Savior. He that thinks himself well and strong will spurn the physician. Christ came to call sinners to repentance, and not the righteous. Only sinners convicted of their sin by the Law will accept Jesus as their Savior. For this purpose the preaching of the Law is so necessary. Our theme for to-day shall be:

"Wherefore, Then, Serveth the Law?"

1. Its chief purpose is to lead man to a due knowledge of his sin.
2. To believers in Christ it is a rule, showing them how to spend their lives in the service of God and their neighbor.

1.

The lawyer in our Gospel-lesson was blind with regard to his true condition in the sight of God. He was trying to establish his own righteousness before God. He seems to have had a very good knowledge of the Law; for when he answered Christ's question: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou? he said: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," etc., thus summing up admirably the contents

of the Law, which drew forth from the Savior the words: "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live."

But there was evidently something in the tone of the Savior as well as in the clear and penetrating look which He fastened upon that man which made the latter feel uneasy, embarrassed, confused, yea, guilty. In the presence of Christ those words which he had repeated so often assumed a far deeper meaning to him than they had ever had before; they were to him a discerner of the thoughts and intents of his heart.

How deceitful, however, the human heart! We read: "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" Why is he silent about the first table of the Law? Had the false, distorted teaching of the Pharisees blinded his mind to such an extent that regarding this he felt at ease in his conscience? Was he perhaps thanking God that he was no idolater, blasphemer, Sabbath-breaker? In all probability he had paid his tithe, down to the anise and cumin, rigidly observed his fasts, carefully kept his feasts, and never had neglected his prayer formulas.

But his neighbor? He felt uneasy in regard to that. He was "desiring" to justify himself, pronounce himself righteous, establish his own righteousness also with respect to the second table of the Law. Neighbor, according to the interpretation of the Pharisees, was a Jew or a good friend. But the lawyer felt uneasy in his heart and conscience about this, and the real intention of his question was to set his conscience at ease, to produce some excuse, to turn aside the arrow of conviction.

The answer of the Lord is the parable of the Good Samaritan, which not only shows who is our neighbor, but also what neighborly love is, how it shows itself in daily life, exhibiting at the same time the spirituality of the Law, according to which unselfish, self-sacrificing, disinterested love is required of every man. What a masterful teacher our Savior is! In His divine wisdom He draws for us a picture so clear and full of instruction that he must be blind indeed who is not able to grasp the lessons the Savior intends to teach by this parable.

"A certain man," any one; nothing else about him is mentioned, a man, a human being; thus intimating immediately who is our neighbor: any one who is in need of our help. This man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance about twenty-one miles, a road that led through a rocky, desolate pass, well suited for the purposes of thieves and robbers, known as the "Way of Blood." The traveler, most likely a Jewish pedler, had fallen among thieves, who had robbed him and left him there half dead. If left alone, helpless as he was, he would surely have died. Terrible transgressors of the law, these thieves!

But we are not only "not to hurt or harm our neighbor in his body," but we are to "help and befriend him in every bodily need." How this can be disregarded by a sin of omission is exemplified by the priest and the Levite.

"And by chance" (rather, "by coincidence," or, "it so happened") there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." Jericho was a city where many priests lived. When their allotted service at the Temple was over, they would return to their homes. Thus this priest, who knew the Law, shamefully neglected to help the poor, unfortunate victim of robbers. He probably had various excuses for not helping: "The place is dangerous"; "The man is beyond help"; "Others will be better able to help him." But the next one, a Levite, did likewise; when he came to the place, he "looked on him and passed by on the other side."

What an awful picture of mankind in general! How many murders are committed! How much hurt and harm is done to others by word and deed! How many sins of omission when men are face to face with misery and helplessness!

But on the other hand, what a beautiful picture, this good Samaritan! Belonging to a race despised and hated by the Jews, this man, also journeying along the "Way of Blood," sees the man, wounded perhaps to death, draws near to look at the helpless sufferer; but, unlike the priest and the Levite, he stays by him and, regardless of peril, trouble, or expense, does his best to help the helpless.

Vv. 34. 35. What a wonderful description of the Samaritan's merciful deed! His heart is full of tender compassion for the afflicted man. He puts himself to inconvenience, perhaps exposes himself to peril. After dressing the wounds of the half-dead man, he takes him on his own beast of burden to the inn, there provides lodgings for him, and even provides means for the nursing he will need until his recovery. All these acts of kindness were clearly done to an unknown stranger, without thought or hope of recompense or reward.

Now the Savior asks the lawyer: "Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" Mark well the Lord's question: "Who was neighbor," who acted as such? The lawyer himself had to answer his own question, answer it so that he condemned himself, convicted by his own conscience. The Law, as explained and interpreted by the Savior, acted as a mirror, showing the lawyer what God demands of us and how woefully we fall short of its demands.

This, then, is the chief purpose of the Law: to lead man to a knowledge of his sinful state and thus to make him feel the need of a Savior. But, alas, how hard to bring men to this knowledge! We see this especially in the case of the Pharisees and lawyers. If the lawyer in our text had followed the advice of the Savior, "Go and do thou likewise," this would soon have led him to the knowledge

of his utter inability to keep the Law: to love God above all things and his neighbor as himself. Having experienced this, he would have been driven to look for another righteousness, that righteousness which Christ has won and merited for us by His suffering and death and which becomes ours by faith in Him. Thus the Law acts and serves as a taskmaster, leading the sinner to Christ.

However, having come to this knowledge of our sin and to faith in Christ and thus having found in Him forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, we still have need of the Law; it must show us what kind of life we must lead from now on, what works are pleasing or displeasing to God. In this the Law must continue to be the rule of our lives.

2.

What is the Law? It is the holy, eternal, and unchangeable will of God, summed up rightly by the lawyer: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Thus loving God above everything else and our neighbor as ourselves is the fulfilling of the Law. In this state man was originally created. Through Adam's fall into sin man became self-centered, loving himself above everything else.

In believers the Holy Ghost begins to restore the image of God, implanting into their hearts new love to God and their neighbor. But this love here on earth is but imperfect; it will be perfect when they awake in the likeness of God on the Last Day. While here on earth, hampered daily by their flesh, they need constant instruction, admonition, strengthening. The Law must tell them not only *that* they are to love God and their neighbor, but also *how* this love is to manifest itself in daily life. The Lord, their God, is to be loved with all their heart, all their soul, all their strength, and all their mind. The first commandment implies and includes all the rest; but because of the weakness of the flesh the other commandments enumerate and exemplify our duties toward God and our neighbor.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ makes clear to us who is our neighbor and what our love to him requires of us when he is in need. There we have a vivid picture of this world with its sin, wickedness, and violence, which brings in its wake suffering and misery; we see indifference and callousness towards suffering and pain, but also wonderful mercy and compassion, love active in relieving the dire consequences of sin.

When Christ said to the lawyer: "Go and do thou likewise," He meant not only him, but every one of us. We are to show our love to God and our neighbor in daily life. Occasions for showing mercy there are many. Let us not pass by as did the priest and Levite, but let us follow the example of the Good Samaritan.

But let us also remember that this love to God and our neighbor is not a plant growing of itself in our hearts. First the love of God wherewith He loved us must come into our hearts and there kindle the fire of love to Him and our fellow-beings.

To this end let us see in the good Samaritan a type of the Savior. We, the whole human race, have fallen among robbers and murderers, Satan and his angels. By them we have been robbed of our concreated righteousness. By them we have been wounded and rendered helpless. God, in His infinite mercy and love, saw us lying in our blood. We should have perished forever, had not Christ saved us by giving Himself for us, redeeming us by His own precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. Whoever has realized this, has seen himself ruined and helpless through Satan's guile and power, and then has experienced Christ's redeeming love and mercy, has thereby also learned to love God and his neighbor. The more earnestly a true believer will try to follow the example of Christ in His love to the sinner, the more he will find how cold and selfish his own heart is; and this, again, will create in him a longing for perfect renewal in the image of his God and Savior. He prays daily: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He daily experiences how imperfectly he is doing this holy will of his dear heavenly Father; and therefore this longing for heaven, where, with all the holy angels and all the just made perfect, he also will be made perfect in the love of God. Amen. F. C. VERWIEBE.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 17, 11—19.

"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger." This was the sad exclamation of Jesus when out of ten lepers, healed by His power and love, only one returned to render thanks to him. — But was it only this one case of ingratitude that affected the Savior so painfully? Evidently He looked deeper. He regarded this occurrence as having *typical* significance. He beheld in these nine the thanklessness of men as a whole. He regarded this incident as a prophetic type of what will ever take place. In this light let us meditate on the Gospel-lesson of to-day, beholding —

1. In leprosy a type of sin and its consequences,
2. In Christ the almighty Helper and Savior,
3. In the nine ungrateful lepers a picture of thankless mankind.

1.

The Savior was on His last journey to Jerusalem, only a few months before His crucifixion. He passed through a strip of country with Samaria to the right and Galilee to the left of Him. When

entering a certain village, He was met by ten men who were lepers, some of those unfortunate beings mentioned quite frequently in the gospels. — Leprosy was a dreadful disease, called in the East the "first-born son of death." It causes a gradual decay of the body, first of the skin, then of the bones, then of the flesh; but the afflicted continues to live. It begins with little pain, goes on its slow, but sure course, until it mutilates the body, deforms the features, turns the voice into a croak, and makes the patient a helpless wreck. Lepers were excluded from the sanctuary and the camp, being considered unclean ceremonially and socially. Thus these unfortunates were forced to live apart from the rest of the people, seeking shelter wherever they could find it, in tombs and caves. If some one came upon them unawares, they had to cry out, "Unclean, unclean!" The dread disease was, and still is, incurable; only a special miracle of God could bring about a cure. *Dr. Thomson:* "Sauntering down the Jaffa road on my approach to the Holy City, in a kind of dreamy maze, with, as I remember, scarcely one distinct idea in my head, I was startled out of my reverie by the sudden apparition of a crowd of beggars, without eyes, nose, hair. They held up to me their handless arms, unearthly sounds gurgled through throats without palates; in a word, I was horrified."

Here we have an aspect of human misery and wretchedness that can hardly be surpassed in pitifulness and revolting horribleness. Leprosy is a type of sin, first, in its destructive power and consequences; for what has sin made out of man, who was created in the image of God! Has it not entered and infected body and soul with its deadly poison, carrying in its wake sickness, pain, misery, death, corruption, and decay? Secondly, has sin not rendered man morally and spiritually unclean, defiled him in the sight of God and His holy angels? Thirdly, is man not utterly helpless and hopeless if left to himself, to his own resources and devices? What would have become of him if God had not in infinite love and mercy taken compassion on him and sent His Son into the world to be his Savior and Redeemer? Helplessly and hopelessly he would have passed the time of his life here on earth; within him a feeling of guilt and restlessness, around him misery and wretchedness, and before him death and a certain looking for of Judgment and the wrath to come. This is man's true state and condition here on earth without faith in the Redeemer, who has come to seek and save that which was lost.

2.

"There met Him ten men that were lepers." Misery meets Mercy, the almighty Helper in every need. They knew Him; they must have heard of Him and His mighty works of love and mercy. "They stood afar off." They did not dare to approach Him because

they were unclean. They lifted up their sad and hoarse voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us."

And He did have mercy on them. He saw them; He did more, He looked upon them with eyes full of love and compassion. Their wretched condition touched His heart. Even for this purpose had He come, to help and to save. He hears their cry for help and answers it, but answers it in His own way; for in the gospels there is a striking variety in the dealings of the Lord with those who call on Him. Each person is a specialty to Him. Compare especially Matt. 8, 3; John 10, 6. He bids them go at once and show themselves to the priests. This was a trial of their faith. For the ten to obey was equivalent to trusting that Jesus would cure them. See Lev. 13, 2; 14, 2. Notice also here how Christ refers to the existing ordinances of God even in their deep degradation and perversion. — As the ten went, they were cleansed, and were conscious of their healing. The sensation of health, as of new, fresh currents coursing through the frame, tells them that they were cleansed. Christ's invisible almighty power had brought about the cure. What a glorious Helper and Savior! He is able to help; for He is God Almighty; He is willing to help, for He is rich in mercy and grace.

As in this case, so He is at all times. From all eternity He saw us polluted and lost in our sins. How touching His words to Jerusalem, Ezek. 16, 6: "And when I passed by thee and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Thus He looked on sinful, lost mankind. This constrained Him to come down to this earth, to assume our nature, thus to be able to redeem us with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death from sin, death, and damnation.

As the ten lepers evidently had heard of Jesus' power and mercy, so we, too, have heard of Him in the Gospel, the glad tidings of God's mercy and love which moved Him to send His only-begotten Son to die for us. What a wonderful picture the four evangelists have drawn of Jesus, His power and His love! As the report of His mighty works of love and mercy spread throughout the whole land of Israel and reached the ears of these ten lepers, so His name and fame have been proclaimed in the whole world through the Bible and the preaching of His Word, and by this innumerable sinners, feeling their guilt and misery, have been drawn to Him and healed by Him. For He is still the same. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever."

Do you know Him, this almighty Helper and Savior? Have you realized your helpless and hopeless condition without Him? Have you appealed to Him, as those lepers did, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me"? Or do you think that you are standing in no need of

a Savior? If this is the case, then you have grown insensible to the disease within you. You then are like the Pharisees in the gospels, to whom Christ said: "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." How sad! Christ came to seek and save the lost, to heal the sick, and you are sick unto death, but you reject him as your Savior!

But, oh, what joy fills the hearts of those who know and feel their misery and sin, who have appealed to Him for help and mercy and have experienced His power and ability to save! They say with David of old, Ps. 103, 2. 3: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases."

But, alas, how many do forget what the Lord has done for them, forget to thank Him! Of this lastly.

3.

One of the ten who had been miraculously healed of their leprosy, yes, only one, returned to give Him thanks; the others soon forgot both benefit and Benefactor. What ingratitude! Only a short time ago helpless and hopeless in their misery, now new life and health coursing in their veins, they failed to recognize their obligation. Note the painful words of the Savior: "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger."

How typical this incident of the ingratitude of mankind in general! Did Christ not give Himself a ransom for all? Still the vast majority of men live without ever thinking of His tremendous sacrifice, of the blood which alone is able to cleanse them from their sins, much less thanking Him for it. How many of those who once were baptized in His name and who, at their confirmation and at other occasions, realizing what the Savior has done for them, confessed their faith in Him and vowed to remain faithful to Him unto death, later shamefully forsook Him because they loved the world and its sinful pleasures! How great is the number of those who, passing through times of terrible distress and anguish of soul, promised the Lord that from now on, if He would help them only this time, they would prove their thankfulness in word and deed, failed to keep their promise!

It is also very significant that the grateful leper was a Samaritan ("this stranger"). Compare here also the story of the centurion of Capernaum and the Syrophenician woman, whose faith surprised the Savior. We may become so familiar with the greatest of facts as to become insensible to their greatness. Great privileges are often abused. It was so in Israel. It behooves us to take earnest heed lest we fall into this fatal snare. "Many shall come from the East

and West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Are we like this Samaritan? Have we come to a true knowledge of the condition we are in since Adam's fall, which has brought death into the world and is the cause of all our woe? Do we realize the enormity of our sins in the eyes of God, so that they could be atoned for only by the blood of His only-begotten Son?

Has this love of God taken hold of our hearts, so that with thankful hearts we can say and sing: "Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee"?

Do we show our gratitude also in our lives, so that we live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us and died for us?

So many forget the cleansing of their sins, just as those nine forgot what Jesus had done for them. Their hearts are engrossed with the things of this world, its pursuits and pleasures, they return to old things, or new scenes and circumstances influence them in an evil way. Is ingratitude not perhaps the most common of all vices?

Let us learn of the thankful Samaritan, of whom it is said: "When he saw that he was healed, he turned back and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks." What perfect joy and happiness must have filled his heart and soul when Jesus said to him: "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole"!

But here on earth, alas, how cold our love and thankfulness! Therefore the longing of the true believer's heart to be renewed in the image of Him who created us and who has drawn us to Himself with an everlasting love, when with immortal tongues we shall join the heavenly host, and all the saints perfected in glory, in their never-ending hymns of praise. (Hymn 62, 15.) F. C. VERWIEBE.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 6, 24—34.

That there is an eternal, almighty, and all-wise God is written in every man's heart. Even of the heathen, St. Paul writes, Rom. 1, 19. 20: "Because that which may be known of God . . . so that they are without excuse." Man also knows, even after the Fall, that he is to serve this God; for the same apostle writes, Rom. 2, 14. 15: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law . . . accusing or else excusing one another."

Alas, how flagrantly mankind is sinning against conscience and better knowledge, having "changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator"!

Even those who by faith in Christ have become the children of God need constant admonition and warning to serve God only. For in our text Christ is speaking to His believers, warning them of the danger of trying to serve two masters, God and Mammon. Let us consider these two services: —

1. The service of Mammon; 2. The true service of God.

1.

Mammon means property, wealth, especially money, the goods of this world. Observe that it is not the possession of wealth that Christ condemns, but the sin of *serving* it, making it an object of anxious thought and pursuit. Gathering it and using it in the service of God and according to His will is not serving Mammon. — Many think only rich people can be servants of Mammon, not the poor. But when Jesus says: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" and then proceeds: "*Therefore* I say unto you, Take no thought for your life" (be not overanxious, do not worry about), "what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on," it is clear that anxious worrying over these things is Mammon service.

"Take no thought" (Revised Version: "Be not anxious"). These words have often been misunderstood, as though Christ were forbidding forethought in earthly things. He does not commend the thoughtless and careless. Christians are enjoined to "work with quietness and eat their own bread." Scripture condemns those who *provide* not for their own, especially not for those of their own house. It is overanxiety, distracting cares, worrying, which Christ forbids.

These anxious, distracting cares dethrone the great and almighty God in the heart. We are to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. This is the service God demands of us. But the anxious, worrying person is looking upon Mammon, the goods of this world, as the object of his love and trust and fears the loss of money and earthly possessions more than anything else. The mouth of such a person may still say: I believe in an almighty, all-wise, and good God, but his heart is far from Him. The Savior says: "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." The meaning is this: That great and almighty God who has created you, given you body and life with all their wants and needs, will surely supply you with the much lesser things, such as food and clothing. If you give way to anxious and distracting thoughts, you will fall to the level of the Gentiles, who know Him not in His power and goodness, His wisdom and His love. For "the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. 4, 17. 18.

According to these words of the Savior we must prove ourselves. "No man can serve two masters." This is a solemn warning. There can be but one true service rendered by our real selves. Yet nothing is more common than the foolish attempt to achieve the impossible. The result is the miserable failure of a distracted life. The man who would serve two masters has no success or joy in either pursuit. When trying to serve Mammon, he is haunted by a disturbing conscience that restrains him from going as far as he would and vexes him with muttered reproaches. When endeavoring to serve God, his conscience again tells him that God will not accept such half-hearted service. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with *all* thy heart." There is no middle way, no compromise. We cannot serve both; we must serve one; and he who does not serve God serves Mammon and is an idolater.

Christ furthermore tells us how vain and sinful such service of Mammon is. "Which of you, by taking thought [being anxious], can add one cubit unto his stature" (rather, to the length of his life)? All our worrying and anxious cares will not do any good; on the contrary, anxious thoughts becloud the mind, depress heart and courage, and weaken our strength. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This shows that anxious cares for the morrow, for the future, only add to our burdens of to-day and render us less fit properly to perform our present duties. The anxious, worrying person thinks and acts as though no almighty, all-wise, and benevolent God were ruling us and the world. God has been dethroned in his heart. And in the parable of the Sower, Christ warningly declares that "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word" in the heart and thus render it, the heart, unfit for higher, heavenly things; and Phil. 3, 19 St. Paul says of the earthly-minded, "Whose end is destruction." What a sad lot of those who serve Mammon. Here on earth a divided, distracted heart and mind and hereafter everlasting destruction! Therefore beware of serving Mammon! — Let us now look at the other master, God.

2.

In what, according to our text, does the true service of God consist? In giving our hearts entirely to Him, trusting implicitly, wholly, and joyfully in His power, wisdom, goodness, and love.

In order to draw our hearts to this service, Christ says: "Is not the life more than meat [food] and the body than raiment?" God, our Creator, has given us our life and our body. At the beginning He formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and He is still the Author of all the lives of the numberless people living on earth. In receiving life and body from God, we have already, together with life and body, received the

assurance that He will provide us with food and clothing; for they, as the lesser gifts, are included in the greater gifts of life and body. Will God forsake the work of His own hands? That is unthinkable. And to expel from our hearts all doubts as to this being true and certain, He bids us behold the birds of the air and to consider the lilies of the field. Learn the lessons they are teaching you. The Lord of nature directs us to a study of nature. We are to imitate the birds in their happy contentment, in their freedom from distracting cares. If the birds are nourished by God, without sowing, reaping, gathering, how much more His children! He is not only our Creator, but He is our heavenly Father, who cares for us with parental care. As human beings created after His image and as God's children we excel and surpass all other creatures in His sight; for we have immortal souls, and for us the Son of God came into the world. How much more tenderly will God care for us than for His lesser creatures!

For this reason we are to repress all anxious thoughts. They are, besides, utterly unavailing, as fruitless as the attempt would be to add a cubit to our stature (length of life). No amount of anxious thoughts and efforts can prolong our life beyond its divinely appointed limit.

Another reason to trust God implicitly is taken from the lilies, the flowers of the field, in their splendor, beauty, and delicacy. So exquisite is the clothing of the lily of the field and of other insignificant flowers that the dress of that magnificent monarch Solomon in all his glory, the choicest productions of the loom and needle, with their gorgeous coloring, and decked with a profusion of jewelry, sinks in the comparison, as a test under the microscope will prove.

Now follows Christ's application: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, . . . shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" In comparison with man, created in the image of God, redeemed by Christ's holy and precious blood, called to God's eternal glory in Christ Jesus, how insignificant are the flowers of the field! Their existence is of very short duration. And still God clothes them with beauty and splendor. How much more will He supply the bodily wants and needs of His children! "O ye of little faith!" this is Christ's gentle rebuke for us if anxious thoughts or even doubts come into our hearts.

"Therefore," — a conclusion from the foregoing, — since God's sustaining and upholding power and love are manifest in birds and flowers and much more so in His children, therefore be not anxious in regard to food, drink, and clothing. This the Gentiles, heathen nations, do, who do not know God, who do not joyfully put their trust and faith in him. "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." He gave you body and life and fully knows

all your needs, has taken account of them, and is ready and able to supply them.

"Seek ye first," etc. Let your desires and efforts be directed towards higher objects, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *Luther:* "There are many ways devised by men for *seeking* the kingdom of God, but there is only one way of *finding* it, namely, by believing in Christ and studying the Gospel diligently, with watching and prayer, so that its divine truth may take deep root in our hearts and bear fruit in our lives." This is the true service of God. We enter into this kingdom by faith in Christ, by accepting the righteousness He gained for us upon the cross; and a fruit of this faith is leading a life pleasing to Him in true righteousness and holiness. This is, and must be, the first and greatest object and care of every true believer. If and where this is the case, "all these things," all earthly and bodily wants and needs, will be supplied by the Father in heaven. "Take therefore no thought [be not anxious] for the morrow." These words forbid all anxiety occasioned by a want of confidence and trust in God. They do not, however, forbid us to gather the products of the field for future use and consumption or rightly to provide for other ordinary and constantly recurring events. "The morrow" refers not only to the day following, but also to all future time. Be not anxious about a time which is not present as yet. That time is in God's hands. He will, as He has done to-day, provide for all that will then be required. Whatever is needed will be ready at the time when it is needed and in the way God regards it as needed by us. Christ says: Because all needful things shall be added, do not have one anxious thought for the future, even for what is coming on the very next day. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Since Adam's fall there is evil in the world, such as toil, trouble, sickness, sorrow, grief, and care; and each day some of these evils will come to us. But we are not to add to the burden of to-day that of to-morrow and the future.

How care-free, joyful, and glorious our life would be if we served the Lord in such perfect and implicit trust! We are to remember always and under all circumstances that the great, eternal, almighty, all-wise, gracious, kind, and faithful God is our Father through Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son. Will He neglect and forsake His children? This is utterly impossible. Why, then, be anxious about the needs of the body? Let us learn from His blessed Word and also, as Christ tells us, from nature surrounding us how God is able and willing to sustain all His creatures and to supply all our wants; and thus let us seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and serve Him in joyful obedience. Amen. F. C. Verwiebe.

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 7, 11—17.

Jesus is the "Wonderful." This was the name whereby "He shall be called." True to Isaiah's prophecy, He did wonders, many wonders. From the time of His birth to the hour when He died He did countless wonders. John 21, 25. He healed all manner of sickness, removed all manner of want, raised the dead; water, wind, sea, and the fishes in the sea obeyed His voice.

Jesus did wonders as God only could do them. He did them in His own name and by His own power. By them He revealed His glory, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1, 14.

It is for us to behold this. He is altogether wonderful.

Also in to-day's Gospel, Jesus appears as wonderful, the Wonderful. On the previous day He had healed the servant of the centurion; to-day He raises the widow's son at Nain. Wonderful.

What Jesus was at that time, that He is always. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever." Despite the failure of so many to behold His glory, to recognize Him as Lord and God, He is to-day and always the Light and the Life of the world. May we consider this as we contemplate —

Nain and Jesus.

We note: —

1. *Even the loveliest place on earth is subject to death and mourning.*
2. *Nothing earthly gives real help and comfort.*
3. *Jesus only offers life and light.*

1.

Nain means beautiful. It was a beautiful village, lying at the foot of the mountain called the Little Hermon, in Galilee, not far from Cana and Nazareth. This mountain enriched the valley about Nain. One tradition names the Little Hermon as the place where Jesus spoke the Sermon on the Mount. A few miles west Mount Tabor rose 1,600 feet, the Mount of the Transfiguration, as some believe. Truly, a beautiful situation in a fruitful valley. And the people of Nain were largely well-to-do.

And yet: v. 12.

Yes, also in Nain, death ruled. The dearest were taken. No matter how beloved, useful, or necessary, Nain's people also must die. "Death has come upon all." Rom. 5.

This is typical of this world. Always and everywhere the same. In the country and in the city, among the rich and among the poor,

among the mighty and among the weak, everywhere and at all times, death rules. Despite all human progress so called, notwithstanding science, discoveries, skill, and love, there is no place where death does not reign.

May we note the fact! Though there are those who endeavor to avoid the thought of death, may we keep our minds open to the conditions that no one can escape. "Death has passed upon all men, because all men have sinned." Yes, "the wages of sin," death, must be, and are being, paid everywhere, in the palace and in the hovel, upon land and sea, in the jungles and in the metropolis. Who can dispute the fact?

O beautiful earth, God's wonderful handiwork, God's gift to the children of men, death, the wages of sin, rules everywhere within thy fair borders.

2.

Nain was lovely, but this could not compensate the widow for the loss of her only son.

The surrounding country, mountains and valleys, was rich in blessings and even in sacred memories; but this could not lift the heavy weight of loneliness and sadness from the widow's mind and heart. Hermon's cooling breezes, Tabor's inspiring vision, conveyed no lasting relief or help.

Hosts of kindly friends and acquaintances surround the widow and extend their sympathy; they do all they can; but they cannot change the fact of death and its surroundings. The widow must lay her dear one into the grave, give him up, lose him for this life. So with her husband and so now with her son. There is no real help or comfort for her in all this earth.

And so for all of us and in all the ages. From the day that saddened the home of our first parents when Abel's blood cried to heaven for vengeance, down to this age and day, man has discovered no real panacea to heal the bereavement death causes or to reconcile us to death's ravages among our race. Human sympathy, precious as it is, cannot do it; human philosophy, no matter of what kind, fails here. There is no real earthly help or comfort.

3.

But here see Jesus at Nain. He comforts and helps; He offers life and light.

Jesus approaches with compassion. V. 13. He, the Son of God, full of grace and truth, in all respects "tempted like as we are," Heb. 4, 15, feels with the widow in her sorrow.

He speaks comfortably to her, v. 13: "Weep not."

He helps: Vv. 14. 15.

Truly, here is life. Here is the Light that shineth in darkness, that lights the way out of death to life. Here at beautiful Nain, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and with the view of Mount Tabor, this wonder recalls to us the words of the psalmist (Ps. 89, 12. 13): "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name. Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand."

And so it has been always in this world since the day on which God's love promised to dying man His Redeemer from sin, death, and the devil. Jesus, in other words, Jehovah's Savior, has been the Life and the Light of the world, and there is none other. He stands, as it were, at the gates of time and faces every funeral march. He is always full of compassion — the sympathy that inclined Him to "think it not robbery to be equal with God" and induced Him to take upon Himself the form of a servant, to be made in the likeness of men, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Out of that compassion He calls to those who are weighed down by death's sorrow, yes, to all dying mankind: "Weep not." And speaking thus, He reveals Himself as the Wonderful One, the Victor over death, who has brought life and immortality from the grave, saying: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

There is none other. Look unto Him as you bury your dead. Look unto Him as you contemplate your own dying hour. He, and He only, will enable you to triumph and in His wonderful name to declare: "O death, where is thy sting?" etc. H. B. HEMMETER.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Luke 14, 1—11.

One of the most exalted pictures of Christ in the gospels is that in which He stands before Pilate, as portrayed in Matt. 27, 12: "And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing." It is so exalted because Jesus stands there in such manifest innocence, willingly submitting to the indignity of being innocently condemned, though He had all power in heaven and on earth and with one word might have laid all His enemies helpless at His feet. In this picture the chief priests and elders of the people appear as the pitiable, contemptible defamers in spite of all their voluble accusations and insinuations against Jesus, whereas Jesus looms exalted as the Clean among the unclean, and His silence in response to the slanderous complaints of the Jews and the consequent question of Pilate is most powerfully eloquent in His favor.

The opposite is the case in the text before us. Here it is the scribes and the Pharisees that hold their peace, that keep silent.

What a picture! They stand there sullen, convicted, defeated, and Jesus, who by His question disconcerted them, appears their Conqueror.

Let us consider this picture a little more closely and note —

The Silence of Christ's Enemies.

1. It is the silence of defeat, 2. The silence of malice, 3. The silence contemptible.

1.

"They held their peace." Why?

Jesus was in the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day. He was there by invitation and for the purpose of eating bread. But not so in the minds of those who were there with Him; for we read that "they watched Him." Lawyers and Pharisees were there watching Jesus.

What was the purpose of their watching?

A snare had been laid for Jesus. For it was most certainly not by accident that "there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy."

What would Jesus do? That was the question in the minds of His watchers. Would He heal the sick man on the Sabbath-day?

Jesus, who always "knew what was in man" and needed not that any man should tell Him, and who, moreover, never neglected an opportunity to give clear testimony to the truth, to that which is right both before God and man, knew also what were the thoughts in the hearts of these watchers. And so we read: "Jesus, answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?"

"And they held their peace." Why?

These enemies of our Lord began to sense defeat. They had not thought their plot through to the point which the Savior now submitted to them. On their eagerness to find fault with Jesus and in their determination to do Him harm, they had looked at the matter only superficially. To their minds the situation involved only the question as to whether Jesus would observe the letter of the Law that commanded rest on the Sabbath-day, rest from labor, from work. The element of human and divine interest involved in the case of a sick man did not occur to them. To their sin-hardened hearts incurable sickness had lost most of its appeal for help. Consequently the question of Jesus, "Is it lawful to *heal* on the Sabbath-day?" submitted the situation to them in an entirely different light. They were defeated in their purpose by this question, and to answer it as it must be answered rightly meant nothing less than to confess their own undoing.

True, these enemies of Jesus may not at once have felt the completeness of their defeat and have held their peace on that account. It may be that their silence, to some extent, was still a part of their plot and that they wished to let Jesus assume the full risk of whatever action He might take. Still there can be no doubt about it that Jesus disconcerted them to silence by the question He asked, which placed the action that He was about to take on the high plane of healing a sick, suffering being, one of the children of men whom God has loved with an everlasting love and one of those for whom He, the Christ, was giving His life to save and to whom He was to bring help and healing both as to body and to soul.

"And He took him," etc. Vv. 4. 5.

Is it any wonder that "they could not answer Him again to these things"? V. 6. Silenced before, they now stand convicted as those inhuman characters that in their own actions show more interest and love for their property, their asses, and their oxen than they do for their fellow-man.

Oh, that they might have acknowledged the truth of what they had heard! That they might have confessed their defeat and ceased their enmity! But not so these enemies of Jesus. In their defeat they are merely silent.

2.

"And they held their peace." Why?

There was malice in their hearts. Surely.

They knew why they were gathered together in the house of one of the chief Pharisees on that Sabbath-day. They knew why the man who had the dropsy was there at that time. They knew why they had watched Jesus. They knew that malice had filled their hearts and that they had maliciously plotted to harm Jesus. And knowing all this, should it not have moved their hearts in favor of Jesus when He submitted the question involving a work on the Sabbath-day on the high plane of *healing* a helplessly sick man? Ought not the appeal to the bond of sympathy and brotherly love have inclined them to Jesus and to the act that Jesus might perform to help their helpless brother? Ought not love, if it had been in their hearts, have united them with the love divine that was at that very moment teaching them and recalling to them the love that fulfils the Law, the letter of which they had become accustomed to pervert? Most assuredly. But malice stood in the way; it hardened their hearts against God and man. When they talked about the Law and about conscience, their mouths spake, but their hearts were evil.

Again, there was malice in their hearts. For these lawyers and Pharisees knew the Law, and they knew that the sum of its teaching is: "Thou shalt love the Lord," etc., and: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." They knew this, and they knew that it was

right and a matter of duty for all to acknowledge the truth and to uphold that which was right before God and man. Why, then, did they not speak out and give honor and glory to Jesus?

Malice did it all. They were without excuse. Their silence was a part of the "raging of the heathen against the Lord and against His Anointed." An eloquent silence, which reveals the hearts filled with malice.

3.

"And they held their peace." Why?

In its essence it was a silence of contempt, that was, and forever is, contemptible. The high positions and stations of these men cannot change that fact. These men were filled with contempt for Jesus, for their sick brother, for that which was right before God and man, as Jesus had shown them. There was no real love for God or for man in their hearts in spite of their hypocritical pretenses. For that reason they were silent, and in their silence they plotted on and sought to destroy Him who in love would serve them both on the Sabbath-day and every day. Yes, they sought to kill the Lord's Anointed.

Contemptible silence. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall hold them in derision." In spite of the silence of His enemies, Jesus fulfils His exalted office for these gainsayers and for all sinners. In spite of it He completed His work of love to heal both body and soul. In spite of it He finished the heavenly Father's business here on earth to redeem all mankind from sin, death, and damnation.

May we ever beware of the silence of the enemies of Jesus, the silence that refuses to confess the truth that Jesus teaches and that He fulfilled! H. B. HEMMETER.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 22, 1—14.

A very familiar Gospel. In a parable we have here a description of God's efforts through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to win back sinners unto Himself and to their salvation. In picture language we are reminded here of the marriage that the Father in heaven is preparing for His Only-begotten, the salvation that awaits us at the end of time. God is pictured as issuing invitations to this marriage first to the chosen people, the Jews, who, however, make light of the invitation and treat the servants that bring the invitations to them despitefully. Thus offended, God sends His invitation out to the Gentiles and so fills His house with guests. At the end the Gospel gives us a glimpse of the company of the saved, reminding us of the fact that there is a garment needed to participate in that great

marriage feast, the garment that the Bridegroom Himself furnishes, the garment that is made white in the blood of the Lamb, the garment that makes the sinner right in the sight of God, the garment of the righteousness of Christ, the Son of God. It is a familiar Gospel among us, which rings with that cheering appeal and call: —

"Come unto the Marriage."

May we contemplate this invitation by emphasizing the following points: —

1. Christianity is essentially joyful.

The Gospel invitation in our lesson is an invitation to something cheerful and happy. That is Christianity. It is joy, peace, rest; paradise, the kingdom of God.

One of our noted art galleries exhibits on different walls two pictures of prevalent religious experience or expression. In the one picture we see a lot of stern-faced, sorrow-smitten priests turned to a wall, praying. In the other we see a family about a table, praying, their faces lighted with a heavenly radiance, upturned to Him who, though not seen, is yet known as the Father in heaven. Some one has referred to these two pictures as the presentation of two types of practical Christianity.

In reality it is not so. We do not, indeed, forget the fact that the consciousness of sin is depressing and that the crushed spirit and the broken heart are the sacrifices that are pleasing to God. But, after all, they are only the precursors that lead the sinner to the cross of Jesus. Bowing at that cross, however, there comes to the sin-laden penitent the vision that brings rest into his soul; the conviction and the consciousness that God is love, that for Jesus' sake God forgives sin, that now, forsooth, there is no more condemnation, that through Christ we are free from sin's guilt and power, that we are God's redeemed children and joint heirs with Christ. Yes, in reality only that is Christianity which grasps and holds firmly the joy that God offers sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We may therefore well say that as a sinner the Christian is sorrowful, but that as a Christian he is essentially joyful. Christianity is essentially the marriage that unites the Savior and the sinner, God and man.

So was Christianity proclaimed in Eden — deliverance, reunion with the Creator. So through Moses and the prophets, through many types and symbols. Out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Temple, mercy-seat, Holy of Holies. So proclaimed at Christ's birth — "fear not," "glad tidings," "great joy."

2. The mood of those that reject it.

"They would not come." "Made light of it." Careless (*e. g.*, Pharaoh, Pilate, Herod), indifferent, preoccupied, prejudiced. Vv. 5. 6. So were the Jews, God's chosen people.

Some would not come in God's way. They would run along in their own way, without the Savior's wedding-garment. Vv. 11—14.

Just so to-day; this is the mood, the manner, of those who reject Christianity. They either will not at all, or they will not in God's way.

3. The condition of those that accept it.

It was an ancient custom that the bridegroom provided a white garment for the invited guests, which they all must use. The invited guests rejoiced to accept and to wear this wedding-garment.

Just so in Christianity. This is the custom, and, indeed, the necessary custom, since the deplorable moment that man became unworthy to appear in the presence of His God in his own unrighteousness. There remained no other way but to cover man's unrighteousness if he should ever again enter into harmony and communion with his God. God Himself found this way and provided the righteousness of God, revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith. Rom. 1, 16. 17; 3, 21. 22; Rev. 19, 7. 8. This is the precious wedding-garment, the righteousness provided by God through Jesus Christ. Christians joyfully accept this wedding-garment and wear it. "Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness," etc.

Here on earth, to be sure, the hypocrite may run along in Christian ranks without accepting this wedding-garment, may reject Christ's righteousness and trust in his own character and works. But on that great day of the marriage-feast there shall be no deception. The Lord shall know His own.

Oh, for the joy of Christianity! Oh, for the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness! "Come unto the marriage."

H. B. Hemmeter.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 9, 1—8.

To-day's Gospel-lesson reveals Christ as God. He has the power of God to heal, and He proves it. He is God and as God forgives man's sin. This Gospel reveals this gloriously.

The scene of our text is Capernaum, Jesus' own city. The Gadarenes had begged Him, the Deliverer from sin and the devil, to leave their country. Man can reject his God and Savior. And so Jesus had returned to Capernaum.

V. 2: "They bring to Him a man sick of the palsy." The poor man was paralyzed. Jesus sees the root of this and of all human trouble. Sin is in the background. Jesus says: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

V. 3: "Certain scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." If Jesus had been a mere man, this would have been true; for no man can forgive sins of his own power; only God can do that.

V. 4. Jesus "knew" their evil thoughts.

V. 5. Jesus proceeds to prove that He is God by manifesting the divine power which only God has. No man could of his own power do either, heal this sick man or forgive him his sins. Jesus can do both, for He has the power of God; He *is* God.

V. 6. Jesus proves by what His gainsayers could see that which they could not see and so reveals Himself, v. 7, gloriously as the Son of God, the Forgiver of sins.

The multitude that saw it marveled and glorified God. It is pleasing to God if we, too, do so; if, seeing Jesus, we in wonder consider the power that is His, that God has given Him, our Savior.

May we do this as we meditate upon the words of our text: "Jesus, knowing their thoughts"! May we impress upon our minds and hearts the truth: —

Jesus, the Forgiver of Sins, Knows Our Thoughts.

1.

It is an incontrovertible fact that Jesus is God. Therefore He knows all things. It is implied and shown in our lesson; it is proved by the miracle.

The fact that He knows man, man's very thoughts, is frequently referred to in the gospels. John 2, 23. 24 we read: "He knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man." In connection with the calling of Nathanael this miraculous knowledge is shown to the astonishment of that disciple when Jesus told him where he had been and that he was an Israelite "in whom there is no guile." The Samaritan woman wondered when Jesus told her all about herself. Judas sullenly shrank from that penetrating knowledge; Peter had reason to trust it more.

Yes, that One who towers in His person and in His work so high above the human race, of which He, in love, became a part, Jesus, the everlasting Word made flesh, whose glory His disciples beheld, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, He knows our thoughts. He sees not as man sees, He sees as God sees; He looks upon the heart. He sees men as they are, not as they seem.

2.

There is indeed terror in that fact for those who do not recognize Him as the Forgiver of sins. There must be terror, for all men are sinners. There is no difference; all have the same evil heart, out of which "proceed evil thoughts," — alas, how evil!

Must there not have been terror in the hearts of the scribes of our lesson when they realized that Jesus knew what evil they had been thinking?

What of the gross sinners, the outcasts of human society, when they become conscious of the fact that there is One who knows them better even than they know themselves?

And what of the worldly moral man when he awakens to the fact that the thin coat of veneer with which he has hidden his inner self and much of his private life is penetrated by the eye that sleepeth not, by Him who demands a righteousness that knows no flaw?

Yes, what of the very disciple of our Lord when he considers that the things he is so ashamed of are all spread before Him who knows them all?

Indeed, there is terror in that fact for those who do not realize the nature of this Searcher of man's heart, who do not behold Him as the One who considereth our frame, who knoweth that we are but dust, and who in pity and in love has laid down His very life for us in order that He might free us from all sin and help us to escape its consequences.

3.

Do you thus see Jesus, the Forgiver of sins? Do you see Him as our lesson reveals Him, as the mighty God made man, who by His words and His works has established Himself as the Lord who can say to you and to every sinner, and say it effectually, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"? It is well with you if this is so. For then there is comfort for you in the truth that Jesus, the Forgiver of sins, knows our thoughts. Yes, comfort.

There is comfort, for Jesus loves us with an everlasting love. Phil. 2, 5 ff.

There is comfort, for Jesus can be touched with a sense of our infirmities. Heb. 4, 15. 16. He has compassion on us in our weaknesses.

There is comfort, for He also sees the sincere sorrow for sin and the feeble efforts in doing right; He will not overlook the scintilla of faith.

How wonderful is Jesus, how glorious! God with us; declaring divine goodness, forgiving sins. He knows us. H. B. Hemmeter.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 22, 34—46.

Our text presents to us a question of the highest importance to all mankind. It is put by Jesus to the Pharisees, who had just a moment before asked Him the question: "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" which question the Lord had answered, vv. 37—40. Important as this question of the Pharisees was, the question of the Lord was of even higher importance.

Why? The Lord's question concerns the Redeemer promised by God to man at the time when the Law became man's accuser because man had fallen into sin. It concerns the Messiah, the Christ, whom God Himself had anointed, "set" for the purpose of saving man from sin and all of sin's consequences. God announced this Christ in Eden, and God's revelation from that time on revealed in ever fuller and clearer form the Christ of God in whom mankind was to be saved. How important, therefore, that man should behold Him and properly think of Him who is God Himself and who reveals God's thought to man. Man's thought concerning this Christ determines man's weal or woe for time and for eternity.

Simeon refers to this fact when, with the Christ-child in his arms, he exclaimed: "This Child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel and for a sign that shall be spoken against." This prophecy was fulfilled in Israel. Just so the lot of all men is determined by their thoughts concerning the Christ.

How important hence also for us the question, "What think ye of Christ?" Let us therefore briefly consider —

Thoughts Concerning Christ.

1. The Promised One; 2. The Christ that came.

1.

We call attention to the insufficient thought, the thought that considers Him less than He was promised to be; the thought which, though good in itself, nevertheless does not accord to Him the honor or the position that God in His promise has given Him.

According to divine promise the Christ was to be, Gen. 3, the "Woman's Seed," a Redeemer whom the Creator Himself would "put," "set," into the act that would settle accounts with the Tempter, the Deceiver, who by sin had won over to himself and to destruction man, God's crown of creation. According to the divine promise this special gift of God to man, Jehovah's Savior, was to be most truly one of our human race, Abraham's son, and yet the Lord in whom Abraham believed and through faith in whom Abraham was accounted righteous in the sight of God. He was to be David's son and at the same time David's Lord, the Good Shepherd, by faith in whom David could say: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." The promised Messiah was to be, as Isaiah so clearly prophesied, the "Immanuel," that is, "the God with us," the One whose name should be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Is. 7 and 9. He was to be born in Bethlehem Ephratah, He "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Such is the Christ of promise, and into this outline divine prophecy fills in God's work for the salvation of the human race.

Surely the thoughts of the Pharisees of our lesson cannot be sufficient when they regard Him merely as David's son and not as David's Lord. No matter how high their thoughts of David or of the house of David may be, as long as those thoughts remain within the limitations of the human, as long as those thoughts make the Christ a mere man, so long they are insufficient, so long they do not measure up to God's thoughts concerning Him as revealed in the promises concerning Him.

May we indeed "search the Scriptures" because in them we think we have eternal life and because they testify of Christ; and may we accept, and by faith enclose, the Christ who is there revealed! Only in the fulness of revelation is He sufficient for our needs. Is. 53.

2.

The Promised One has come. Jesus of Nazareth has been sealed by God, John 6, by manifold signs and wonders, to be both Christ and Lord. In His teachings and in His life He has revealed Himself as mankind's great Prophet, Priest, and King.

"What think ye of Christ," the Christ of fulfilment? Does He measure up to the Christ of promise?

Jesus of Nazareth claims for Himself that He is the promised "Son of Man." Matt. 16, 13. At Caesarea Philippi, on the borders of Judaism and paganism, in the face of the world's great philosophies, so-called religions, Jesus asks the question, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" His disciples tell Him of the insufficient thoughts of men concerning Him, thoughts that were by no means mean or low, but high as far as the thoughts of men concerning mere men may be. Jesus then asked His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" And when Simon Peter had answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus tells Peter that the Father in heaven had revealed this great fact to him. Yes, Jesus declared Himself to be the promised Son of Man, the Christ of God.

Did Jesus of Nazareth measure up to the promises concerning the Christ?

"Search the Scriptures," read the gospels. Ever and again our hearts will burn, as did those of the disciples on that resurrection day, as Jesus opens to us the Scriptures to show us and all men that in Him the Scriptures have been fulfilled. Yes, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of our Bible.

True, the Pharisees of our lesson did not accept Him as the Christ. Neither did they accept the Christ of promise. Concerning the Christ of promise they permitted their own insufficient thoughts to take the place of the thoughts of God so clearly revealed. Concerning the Christ of fulfilment they permitted their prejudices to blind their minds, and in their rage they indulged thoughts that were

both blasphemous and devilish. Yes, they straightway accused Jesus of having a devil and of doing His marvelous works of love by the aid of the devil. They called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber. They accused Him of being a perverter of the people, and they delivered Him to the Gentiles to be crucified. In an ignorance that is nigh inconceivable they "killed the Lord of Life."

"What think ye of Christ?"

Are our thoughts of Him sufficient, sufficient to save? Are they the thoughts that God Himself has revealed in promise and that Jesus proclaimed and fulfilled? Text: vv. 44. 45; Ps. 2.

May our thoughts of Jesus be the thoughts of Peter, Matt. 16, 16; of John, John 1, 14; of Paul, 1 Cor. 15, 22. 23. H. B. HEMMETER.

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity.

John 4, 46—54.

"So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee." What a blessing for Cana! He from whom all blessings flow, abides there! The Lord of life and death, the Savior, the Prophet whose words are spirit and life, the Light of the World, in whom is salvation for all.

How many of Cana's inhabitants realized the heavenly blessing of having Jesus in their midst? Not very many. But one from far Capernaum comes. A nobleman, an officer of Herod's government. He journeys to Cana to find the Lord and goes home rejoicing. Let us

Follow the Nobleman.

1. Realize your helplessness.

A) Vv. 46. 47. The son of the nobleman was sick. He was at the point of death. Picture to yourself the anxiety of the father, his frantic endeavors to keep his son from dying. Nothing avails. He despairs of all human knowledge and power. He is at his wit's end. He realizes his helplessness. He knows mere man is powerless when confronted with death.

B) Follow the nobleman. Realize your helplessness. This is very difficult for natural man. Man is a captive of Satan's lie: "Ye shall be as gods." Gen. 3, 5. He refuses to acknowledge his utter helplessness. To his pride this thought is repugnant. Though every catastrophe, every cemetery, demonstrates his helplessness, he refuses to realize it. His proud spirit must be broken. The Law of God will do that.

C) Why not be reasonable? Should not sober reflection teach us that we are helpless in the face of death? Again, why is death? Whence come sickness and death? Why not listen to the truth? The wages of sin is death. Sin is the cause of sickness and death.

Man is a helpless subject of disease and death because he is a sinner. He has rejected his God. Thus he has left the only source of life and happiness. Why not realize it and ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Follow the nobleman and

2. Turn to the proper person.

A) Vv. 47. 49. The nobleman had heard of Jesus. In Cana, Jesus had made water wine. V 46. Thereby He had revealed His glory, His divine majesty. The nobleman reasoned, If this Jesus was able to turn water into wine, then He is likewise able to help me, to heal my child. He is the proper person to appeal to.

B) Follow the nobleman. Many, having realized their helplessness, have looked about for help, but very often in the wrong place. They imagine that they can escape the consequences of their sins by self-torture, by turning over another leaf, by correcting their faults, etc. This is contradicting themselves. Realizing their helplessness, they yet attempt to help themselves. Logical thinking cannot be expected from those who are entangled in Satan's lie. Some even turn to Jesus, but in a proud, bitter spirit, like the malefactor who scornfully said: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us."

C) Let us follow the nobleman and go to Jesus with our great trouble in a humble spirit. We have heard of Him. The Bible tells us who He is, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, etc., and what He did, His suffering and dying for us, and how tenderly He loves us, that He refuses none, not the greatest sinner. Indeed, the God-man, the God-chosen Redeemer, the merciful Savior, is the proper person to turn to. Therefore follow the nobleman and

3. Trust Jesus' word.

A) V. 50. Jesus said to the nobleman: "Go thy way; thy son liveth." That is all He did. He did not go with the man to his home. He simply said, Thy son liveth. The nobleman did not and could not see whether this word of Jesus had the desired result. And yet the man believed the word. Jesus was to him almighty and trustworthy. He doubted neither His willingness nor His ability to help. He went his way fully convinced that his son lived. V. 52. 53. He found after an investigation that his conviction was correct, and his faith was strengthened and purified. He saw that he had been very foolish to think that it would be necessary to have Jesus at his home. As though the Lord, the Almighty, could not render help at a distance! Now he knew better. He trusted His word.

B) Follow the nobleman. When a rich and trustworthy man gives you a check-book and tells you that he has deposited a thousand dollars in your name, then you are glad. You have not seen him doing it, you have not seen the money; but you know the man to be rich and trustworthy, therefore you joyfully write your checks.

Jesus has taken away your sins. He has died for you. He has forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for you. He is the God-man, mighty and willing to save. He certainly is trustworthy. He tells you in the Gospel that there is salvation for you. He bids you accept it. He calls you: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And by His Word He offers that rest, pardon, forgiveness, life, happiness. You cannot see it nor feel it, you cannot verify it by observation. But you have His Word for it. And He is trustworthy. The thing for us to do is simply to accept it by trusting His Word and then gladly and rejoicingly go our way through life. Even in the face of death we may proclaim: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." H. J. Bouman.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 18, 23—35.

This is a gripping story. It arrests our attention. We read it with bated breath. We see and hear the different persons as though we were present. Our heart is stirred with various emotions. We pity the servant in his distress; we rejoice with him when the mighty king reveals such glorious mercy. We are incensed at the servant's selfishness and cruelty. We cannot but approve the king's just verdict. And the application makes it a personal matter, it strikes home. The question confronts us: Am I like that wicked servant? And from our perturbed heart to our trembling lips arises the humble petition: —

Father, Let Me Not Forget Thy Tender Mercies!

1. Father, Thou hast forgiven all mine iniquities.

A) Vv. 23—25. The mighty king took account of his servants. He had entrusted certain funds to them for administration. Whenever he demands it, they must render an account. There is no possibility of refusing. They must come, they must submit to an investigation of their doings in the service of the king. Here is one who is found to be short in his accounts ten thousand talents. A huge debt. It is not necessary to tell how this came about, whether by dishonesty or mismanagement or adverse circumstances. The bare fact is stated that he owed this huge amount. And since he had nothing with which to meet his obligation, the stern command goes out: v. 25. Hopeless slavery!

B) The king is God. We are His servants. He has given us a soul with wonderful faculties — mind, will, heart — and a body

with equally wonderful members. He has commanded us to employ them entirely in His service, for His glory and honor and for the welfare of our fellow-men. And the one thing that should underlie, and prompt and pervade, all our actions is love. Love must determine and characterize our relation to God and to our fellow-men. How beautiful is the holy Law of God!

And we must render an account. When the Law becomes alive in our consciousness, when we earnestly ponder its demands and compare with them our actions, we at once find that we are short of the glory of God. There is an endless handwriting against us, a huge debt to pay. And since we have nothing with which to pay, we fall subject to the terrible curse of the Law. What then?

C) Vv. 26. 27. The servant babbled in his fright. He promised more than he could ever do. Yet it is a cry for mercy. And the king was moved by compassion. Wonderful king! His compassion was great. And his action was like his compassion. He loosed the servant and canceled his debt. Picture to yourself the servant's relief. Free and without debt! Wonderful king!

D) The terror-stricken sinner cries for mercy. The publican prayed: "God be merciful to me, a sinner," the prodigal cried: Father, I have sinned against Thee. And God is merciful. Looking upon fallen mankind, hopeless and helpless in the power of sin, death, and the devil, He was moved with compassion. He did not even wait for the cry of distress. He sent His only-begotten Son to redeem the lost, to pay the debt for them, to render satisfaction for them. With Christ that awful handwriting was nailed to the cross and blotted out. Thus complete forgiveness was prepared for every debtor. Behold the tender mercies of the Father, who spared not His own Son, but sent Him into death in the place of the sinners!

And whenever now a trembling sinner approaches and cries for mercy, the Father will receive him lovingly and tenderly and assure him of His forgiveness. Indeed, He most tenderly invites and urges all sinners to come unto Him and tells them in the most convincing manner that He will in no wise cast them out. Should not a story like this one assure the greatest sinner that the Father is merciful? Behold the tender mercies of the Father! Yea, Father, Thou hast forgiven all mine iniquities.

2. Father, let me not forget it.

A) Vv. 28—30. Cruel, selfish servant! How wicked he was! There must have been no love for his merciful master in his heart. What he felt was only relief from his burden; he thought only of the fact that he had escaped once more and would not have to bear the consequences of his guilt. His heart was not touched. The old

cruel selfishness still controlled his actions. Even the distressful cry of his fellow-servant did not move him. Instead of remembering his own plight and his own wonderful deliverance, he gave free rein to his hard, unfeeling selfishness. But retribution was swift and severe and just. His pardon was at once revoked and the former sentence intensified and executed to the last letter. He refused to follow the rule of compassion and thereby placed himself under the rule of the law and was lost.

B) This is held up before us Christians as a warning. Our merciful Father has, in Christ, forgiven us all our transgressions. He has reinstated us as His children. And being that, we must be like unto Him. In Him we see the beauty of love and compassion. We have experienced this compassion. Through His love and compassion we are saved from eternal torments in hell. This has changed our hearts. It makes us fight against that cruel selfishness which ruled our actions in our corrupted natural state. But we must not forget that in this life there will be in us always some of the old carnal mind. In our various relations to our fellow-men, in our daily intercourse, some one may sin against us. Here and there a word or an action by our brother may be insulting. We feel hurt. But it is a little thing. Compared with our own huge debt before God, our brother's debt is always small indeed. Yet we are apt to be moved to resent it, to cruelly withhold our forgiveness. That means, in the end, a falling back into our natural state of selfishness. And if there is no return, it means forfeiting God's mercy. For if one refuses to be ruled by compassion, he will fall under the rule of the Law and its curse. Let us, then, remember God's tender mercies toward us. Let us not forget that He has forgiven all our numberless sins. Let us follow Christians like Stephen, who prayed for his bitter enemies that stoned him to death. Above all, we should go to our gracious Father in heaven with the petition: Father, let me not forget Thy tender mercies.

H. J. Bouman.

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity.

Matt. 22, 15—22.

The folly and the hypocrisy of the Pharisees furnished the occasion for a very important statement of the Lord. Foolish Pharisees, to think that they could entangle in His words Him who is the Fountain of wisdom! The hypocrites! They themselves were disloyal to their government, and now they tried with honeyed words to put the Lord into the awkward position of either losing the esteem of His people or of arousing the suspicions of the Herodians, the representatives of the civil government. They were wicked men, who came protesting the honesty and wisdom of the Master, yet planned

and hoped for His complete discomfiture. But the Master used their folly, hypocrisy, and wickedness for teaching us the duties toward both the civil government and toward God. And what He taught He lived. Let us, then, behold —

Jesus, the Ideal Citizen,

1. In the kingdom of man, 2. In the kingdom of God.

1.

A) Many of the Jews were not loyal citizens in the kingdom of man. They continually planned and schemed to overthrow their lawful government. Caesar must keep a large force of trained soldiers to make them obey the law. They submitted to the authorities, not willingly, but only at the point of the sword. They did not loyally honor their government, but most heartily hated it. One reason why they hated Jesus was that He did not fall in with their disloyal schemes.

B) Among this rebellious, disloyal people lived Jesus, the ideal Citizen in the kingdom of man. He became flesh of our flesh at a time when the Roman Caesar ruled in Palestine and Roman coin was in circulation. He accepted this situation. The Roman government was in power. That was enough. He honored the government as the representative of God. He was loyal. They tried to make Him king. The devil tempted Him with a vision of earthly power and splendor. He flatly refused to become a worldly king. It would have been an easy matter for Him to become the political leader of His people and to overthrow the government then in power. But He forbade Peter to use the sword in His defense, and He did not call for the hosts of angels. He paid His taxes. Matt. 17, 24—27. Indeed, if all the citizens of the vast Roman Empire had been as loyal as He, all violence, murder, robbery, theft, etc., would have disappeared. Caesar had no better, no more loyal subjects than Jesus was. His Spirit inspired Paul to write: Rom. 13, and Peter: 1 Pet. 2, 13. 14. 17. He taught willing submission to the powers that be as an ordinance of God and resistance offered to civil government as being resistance to the Lord of the world.

C) Holy Scriptures teach us to look upon Christ's fulfilment of the Law as being vicarious; therefore also His conduct as a citizen in the kingdom of man is vicarious. He was the ideal Citizen for us. He rendered perfect obedience to the Fourth Commandment as our Substitute. Our many failings as citizens in the kingdom of man were thus made good. But His conduct serves also as a pattern for us Christians. We are to follow after Him, walk in His steps. If you wish to know what your attitude over against your government should be, study the life of Jesus and live according to His precepts. He was the ideal Citizen in the kingdom of man.

2.

A) V. 21 b: "Render unto God the things that are God's," Jesus said. This reminder was most necessary for the Pharisees. They were disloyal, not only to their civil government, but also to their Lord and God. Out of their hearts proceeded evil, murderous, adulterous, thieving, blasphemous thoughts. The word of the Lord was not the rule of their conduct. Instead of receiving the promised Messiah, the Redeemer, God's own Son, with love and adoration, they hated, reviled, persecuted, hounded Him to death on the cross, the accursed tree. They rejected the Savior of the world and thus rejected God Himself. They were wicked people indeed.

B) But behold Jesus, the ideal Citizen in the kingdom of God. Not a single sin, not one transgression could be laid against Him. His delight was to do the will of the Father. His was a perfect holiness. His trust in God did not waver even when He was in the throes of the torments of hell. He submitted willingly and without the least complaint when God laid the most terrible sufferings upon Him and sent Him into the most humiliating death. Of Him the Father testified: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

C) The contemplation of the perfect life of Christ, His perfect submission to the will of the Father, is our delight. It is our salvation. "Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness My jewels are, my glorious dress, Wherein before my God I stand When I shall reach the heavenly land." When by faith we have put on Christ and His righteousness, all our sins are hidden, then no one in the whole wide world can condemn us.

But being thus justified before God through Christ, let us also follow after Him. "I long to be like Jesus, the Father's holy Son," is the desire of every true Christian. Christians hear His voice, and they follow Him. Their life is a life in His footsteps. (Hymn 334, 1. 2.) The Pharisees marveled when they had heard His words, and well they might, for there He was, the ideal Citizen in the kingdom of man and in the kingdom of God. Amen. H. J. Bouman.

MID-WEEK SERVICES.

First Advent Outline.

Gen. 49, 10.

Three thousand six hundred years ago, in the land of Egypt, a most venerable and way-worn man lay upon a couch surrounded by his twelve sons. The shadow of death is upon his face, and his failing breath is scarcely able to speak. Slowly lifting himself up in his bed, his groping hands have to be guided until they rest, in turn, upon each waiting and bending head. It is *Jacob, the patriarch,* bidding farewell to this earth and giving his parental blessing. Begins with Reuben. Prophecy none too promising (v. 4); continues on to Simeon and Levi; in view of their reckless characters, predictions little encouraging. Now his trembling hands laid upon the head of his fourth son, Judah. Eyeballs light up, voice takes on the accents of joy; a thrill stirs every soul within the chamber. A particular message concerning the Messiah, the promised Seed, the Glory of their family, the Hope of the world. Text. Nothing more instructive and inspiring than to trace the accomplishment of the ancient prophecies in Him who is the substance of them all.

1. The time of fulfilment of Jacob's Messianic prophecy.

In Jacob's day, Israel had no scepter, no lawgiver, no king. Then in Moses they had a lawgiver, but still no king, no throne. Right through all the long period between Joshua and Samuel they had judges, but no scepter. When at last the tribes were gathered under Saul, it was not Judah who had the scepter, but Benjamin, from whose loins Saul sprung.

Rebellious Saul forfeits the throne. Who succeeds him? David, the shepherd son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, and Judah's posterity remains upon the throne of Israel down through the centuries; until about sixty years before the birth of the Savior, descendants of Judah where the temporal rulers of God's people. Then Judea, subjugated by Pompey the Great, became a dependency of the Roman Empire, but still retained its distinct government, subject to the general supervision of the emperor, vested in the Sanhedrin, or Great Council. Shiloh comes. Thirty-seven years after His crucifixion, destruction of Jerusalem. Since then Judah has not even had the shadow of an earthly scepter. Her children have been a byword among all nations.

2. The effect of the coming of Shiloh.

"Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be," which means: To Him the people shall come in willing obedience. The idea is that of people rallying round a standard, a perpetual coming together of

volunteers; and the motto on their flag and the watchword on their lips is, "Shiloh, Prince of Peace." We know how Napoleon raised his armies and how the nations of Europe raise their soldier hosts — by force and stern conscription. Willy-nilly, they must go. We know how Mahomet spread his power and won disciples to his crescent-blazoned flag, by the fierce and bloody logic of the sword. But not so Shiloh. Unto Him shall the people gather. They shall flock beneath His banner and boast themselves in His name. So from the time of His arrival. Coarse-clad shepherds hasten to bend their knees at His cradle. Rich and learned strangers, led by a star, bow down in devotion at His feet. All through His wondrous life. The apostles. Nicodemus. Woman that was a sinner. Publicans. Great multitudes. Little children, that He might bless them. Thief on the cross. Since the days of His earthly sojourn. Apostles went forth, everywhere preaching the Word, lifting up the banner of the Cross, Shiloh's banner. In our day, millions listening to that wonderful name. Nearly all the coral isles that fleck the blue Pacific are gathering to Shiloh; Fijians, Tongans, Samoans, and the rest are finding their way to Christ. Within the last hundred years the lifted Cross has wrought marvels and miracles of grace. To-day India and China are opening their gates to Jesus, and Ethiopia, from the pillars of Hercules to the cape of storms, is stretching out her hands to God. So shall it continue until Shiloh comes again, visibly, in majesty and glory. A mighty gathering before His great white throne.

3. The purpose of Shiloh's coming.

Shiloh means rest, tranquillity. Shiloh is sent with abundant rest. He is the Peace-bringer, as the angel declared, as He Himself invites: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Threefold rest. a) Rest from sin, the origin and cause of all unrest. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Rest from its guilt, a pacified, peaceful, quiet conscience. Rest of soul. b) Rest from life's sorrows. Not exemption from them, but sustenance, composure, and patience in them. Rest in the midst of earth's trials and afflictions. c) All this prelimniary and the foretaste of that blessed, consummated, immortal rest — heaven.

The gift of Shiloh, the significance of this holiday season. Let there be merrymaking, pleasant surprises, and gifts. But these sentiments and manifestations only indicative and expressive of the sublimer sentiment which changes these holidays into holy days by connecting them with Him from whom they have received their origin and in whom they center. Shiloh welcomed into the heart, genuine Christmas peace and joy. (Hymn 138, 5.) L. BUCHHEIMER.

Second Advent Outline.

Deut. 18, 15.

Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the Bible, its Sun and Center, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation. This pertains to the Old Testament as well as to the New. One occasionally meets with people who ask, What good to read the Old Testament? Like rock, hard and uninteresting. In the first place, we have the Lord's direction. When Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures," He meant the Old Testament. Rom. 15, 4.

Is it such hard and uninteresting matter? You remember how gold was first discovered on our Western coast. A man saw a mass of rock and struck it carelessly with a pickax and was startled to find that it contained gold. So with the Bible, the gold of choicest teaching. Most beautifully the Gospel is wrapped up in those Old Testament events and predictions. So in the text.

Moses, a Type of Christ.

1. Striking resemblance of the history of Moses with the history of Christ in its outward and incidental circumstances. Moses born of parents in obscure and humble station, exiles, slaves; Christ, of a poor virgin, in obscure town, carpenter's son. Moses, in infancy, had well-nigh fallen a victim to Pharaoh's murderous wrath; the divine Infant, to Herod's malignity. Moses, when grown up, though called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, did not forget his downtrodden brethren, repudiating the brilliant prospects and profits of Egypt; our Lord, leaving behind the glories of His heavenly home, allied Himself with oppressed mankind. 2 Cor. 8, 9.

2. Identity still deeper. Moses a great deliverer. Description of bondage in Egypt. Providentially preserved, marvelously equipped. Moses as a champion. Worse than Egyptian bondage condition of the sin-stricken, Satan-enslaved, sorrowing world. All means of self-emancipation or amendment of condition lost. Christ is the great Emancipator.

3. Again, a point of resemblance: Moses was a prophet. Not that he uttered many predictions of coming events; that a secondary and subordinate function; preeminently a teacher who proclaimed the will of God. In this respect Moses stands forth unequaled. Take Genesis; the entire Bible built on it. Take the Ten Commandments; words of infinite wisdom and weight. Still higher place. Many other prophets; among them some scarcely, if at all, inferior in the possession of the prophetic gift and manifestation of marvelous power: Elijah, Elisha. Moses' distinction — he was a mediatorial prophet, a go-between: at Sinai; at time of rebellion. Deut. 34, 10. Type of Christ. Text meaningless unless applied to our Lord in the manner explained as Mediator. 1 Tim. 2, 5.

4. But the great antitype far excelled the type, as the brightest star is eclipsed by the glory of the noonday sun. Moses "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in word and deed." Christ delivers truths which eclipse the wisdom of the wisest sages; utters thoughts of God that infinitely distance all else the world has ever heard. John 1, 17. 18; Heb. 1, 1—3; John 3, 16.

5. Miracles; superiority of Christ to Moses. Of a totally distinct order; Moses' miracles, miracles of judgment; Christ's miracles, miracles of love. Moses' first prodigy, turning water into blood; Christ's beginning of miracles, turning water into wine. Different in manner of their performance. Apart from his rod, Moses never seems to have worked; prefaces the lifting up of it with "Thus saith the Lord." Christ heals with personal authority, the exertion of an inherent might. John 5, 17. 21. 26. 27; Luke 7, 14 ("*I* say unto thee," etc.). No preface. No wonder-working rod. In all His deeds a majestic ease, betokening mightiest power, omnipotence.

6. Their character. Moses' outstanding quality, his meekness. Arduous undertaking, much obstinacy, opposition. Yet not without flaw. Temper failed him in Kadesh. Our Lord's meekness absolutely without fault. Provocations, envy, hatred, spite, attempts of stoning, plottings against His life, false witnesses, crucifixion. "Forgive them." In general, John 8, 46; 1 Pet. 2, 22; 2 Cor. 5, 21.

"Unto Him shall ye hearken." The great Teacher come from God, who spake as never man spake; who, being in the bosom of the Father, came forth to declare Him. Alas! that the very people whom Moses so earnestly exhorted turn aside in blind stiff-neckedness! Rom. 9, 31—33; 11, 11.

Thanking God in this holiday season for having raised up unto us such a sinless Prophet, Savior, and Mediator, let us attend to the teachings of His heavenly truth, accept His Gospel of life and salvation.

L. BUCHHEIMER.

Third Advent Outline.

Mal. 3, 1.

What the fathers most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

The key-note of this season of Advent culminating in the rejoicing message of Christmas. We pause for a moment to inquire, Is that really true? Was Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, He that was to come? Regarding that we Christians ought and must have clear and positive understanding, firm, unflinching conviction. To stand in doubt here is to stand in doubt of one's salvation. If it cannot be made out satisfactorily and conclusively that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, who can blame the Jews for rejecting Him? Then the

Church which He claims to have founded is, to say the least, a very brittle fabric; then — what a thought! — our religion is an imposition, our faith a delusion, our preaching faulty and vain.

Jesus Is the Christ, the Messiah.

We prove this —

1. From the account given of His forerunner.

Malachi, the last of the prophets, four hundred years before Christ. The opening statement of his prediction: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me." Who is this messenger? The angel — since angel means messenger — who appeared to Zacharias in the Temple? to Mary at Nazareth? to the trembling shepherds upon the plains of Bethlehem? None of these prepared the way before His people; they merely conveyed a single and hurried announcement to a few persons in privacy. Not the least doubt, John the Baptist. "And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." Zacharias spoke these words by divine inspiration. St. Mark begins his gospel, v. 3, and applies it to John: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Ministry and testimony of John bear it out. John's gospel (1, 27): "He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

2. From the account given of Himself.

"And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." What means "Messenger of the Covenant"? God had determined to provide redemption for fallen man; this plan was called the covenant. The one who is to carry out that plan is called the "Messenger." Note, at same time, that this Messenger of the Covenant is called "the Lord," "the Lord whom ye seek." Accordingly, the Lord and the Messenger of the Covenant are one and the same. This also is comprised in it, that, like the one who prepares His way, He is a man; accordingly, God and man. Who is this person but Jesus of Nazareth? Proof for that contention: the miracles. To John the Baptist's ambassadors and query: "Art Thou He that should come?" Jesus rejoins (Matt. 11, 4. 5): "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Might have added, The water is changed into wine, etc. Another proof, His preaching. "Never man spake like this man." Divinity stamps His every utterance. The truths which He declared have revolutionized the world, have been the mightiest force in the history of man. Then, too, His char-

acter. Stands alone. Challenged His enemies: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Pontius Pilate's testimony. Even infidels like Rousseau bear witness. Add to these evidences the particulars of His birth, so marvelous and sublimely divine; the incidents of His life, of His death, of His resurrection, of His ascension. Explicable only on the assumption that He was the Messiah. The Old Testament would be a book sealed with seven seals, yes, seventy times seven, a dark enigma, and the New Testament, the greatest and shrewdest fabrication, and worse, if Jesus is not the Christ. In truth and in fact, every utterance falls beautifully and harmoniously into its place.

3. From the account given of the place whither He was to come.

"To His Temple." As a Babe, at the presentation. Simeon's utterance. As a youth — His statement, seated among the doctors. As a grown man — His sermons and His miracles wrought there. Cleansing of the Temple. "Suddenly," explained by some Bible students: unexpectedly, contrary to general carnal conception of Messiah as a Restorer and Ruler; or: treading on the heels of His forerunner. Coincides either way. A child, aye, a blind man, so to say, can see in Jesus of Nazareth fulfilment, down to the minutest details.

Still comes to His Temple. Where two or three are gathered; yes, every human heart that cordially receives Him. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" Blessed that person who is convinced that Jesus is the Messiah. Blessed in his faith, for it rests upon an immutable foundation; blessed in his life, for he knows who he is and what he is living for; blessed in his affliction, has some one to look to in sorrow and distress; blessed in his death and blessed in his resurrection, blessed forevermore. With such a belief a blessed holiday season; for what is Christmas without Christ?

L. BUCHHEIMER.

Christmas Eve.

(Based on the Christmas Gospel, Luke 2, 1—14.)

It is Christmas Eve. Christians the world around are celebrating to-night. Happy children's voices are telling in song and story the glory and import of this night; in churches, in schools, and in homes old and young are singing the praises of God for the blessed event which took place on this holiest of all nights of the year. It is

The Night of Our Lord's Nativity!

In the favorite Christmas song of the world we sing of this night:

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

The account of this night's great event in the Christmas Gospel is simple enough. The circumstances were humble and lowly. An unknown carpenter and his wife came to Bethlehem. No such preparations as attend the arrival of prominent personages were made to receive them. No place was found for them in the inn. Joseph and Mary were housed in a stable, and there a manger became the cradle in which Mary's Child was laid.

And yet, all the world had been moved by the registration of the citizens in the vast Roman Empire in order that the birth of the Child of Mary might take place in "royal David's city." For the birth of this Child was the birth of our Savior, the incarnation of the Son of God, the most supreme, transcendent, incomprehensible fact in the history of the world. 1 Tim. 3, 16.

The whole scene as depicted by St. Luke is pathetic in its simplicity and poverty. Luther says it was presented thus to us, "who are generally so cold, that our hearts might, if possible, be warmed a little by contemplating the humble birth of Christ into the world." 2 Cor. 8, 9; Phil. 2, 5—8.

However, this holy night was not to pass without its revelation of divine glory.

To shepherds, as they watched by night,
Appeared a troop of angels bright!

Humble men, engaged in their occupation as shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, where David had once tended the sheep of his father Jesse, were the first recipients of the great Christmas-message. Luke 2, 8—12.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight!
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluiah,
Christ, the Savior is born!

What a grand message! What a glorious Christmas-greeting! "Fear not!" This Babe is born to remove all fear from man's heart and to replace it with faith, love, and trust. "Good tidings of great joy" — for ages the faithful had been waiting for these tidings.

What the fathers most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

"To all people," 1 John 2, 2. "For unto you is born," etc. He who was born in the lowly manger was to be the Savior of the shepherds and also ours. Thus were fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies as well as such special words to Mary and Zacharias as Luke 1, 35. 77—79.

May this great fact that this night is the night of the birth of our Redeemer be impressed anew upon all our hearts!

Finally, we have in the song of the angels the *Gloria in Excelsis,* a declaration of the purpose of the incarnation.

Calm on the list'ning ear of night
Come heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judea stretches far
His silver-mantled plains;
Celestial choirs, from courts above,
Shed sacred glories there;
And angels, with their sparkling eyes,
Make music on the air.

"Glory to God in the highest," etc. The Child in the manger came to make peace between God and man, to atone for our sins, which kept man from sonship with God, to bring to earth the peace of heart and conscience which surpasses all understanding, and to open heaven for the sinner, so that the celestial courts might resound with praises sung by men and angels for God's great love and grace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth!

Let us rejoice and keep the feast by praising God for all that He has done on this glorious night, which became light when the heavens opened and the angels descended and which has made light with heavenly brightness the night of sin and death for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. W. G. Polack.

Christmas Day.

Luke 2, 1—14.

Old and yet ever new is the Christmas Festival. It is old; we have been observing it from our infancy, and many, many generations before us did the same. But it is ever new. When it comes, its joys and charms are fresh and bright like the green of the firs and spruces with which we decorate our homes and churches at this season.

The reason is that the Christmas-message is old and yet ever new. We have heard it many a time, but whenever it is read or recited, we rejoice and are glad to listen to it. On this message rests the breath of God; here we catch some of the fragrance from the tree of life in Paradise; here are some of the green pastures beside the still waters that David sings about in the Twenty-third Psalm. Blessed is every one who here finds joy, solace, comfort. We shall this morning consider this old message, presented to us in the Gospel-lesson for to-day. While every part of this Scripture-passage is

precious, we shall concentrate our attention on the words spoken by the angel to the shepherds. Let this be our subject: —

The Angel's Christmas Sermon.

We note —

1. Its reassuring introduction;
2. The glorious tidings it proclaims;
3. The firm foundation it points to as basis for its tidings.

1.

We go in spirit to the plains in the neighborhood of a little town in Judea, Bethlehem. It is night. Shepherds, poor, humble people, are there, watching their flocks. Suddenly a blaze of supernatural brightness envelops them. In the flood of light they discern a being whom they easily identify as an angel of the great God. Amazed, stunned, overawed, despairing of their very life, or thinking that now the dread day of Jehovah for the judgment of mankind has come, they hear the angel speak. Such was the first Christmas audience. Let us kneel beside these people, and if in outward circumstances we are not so lowly and destitute as they, may we be like them in this, that we are poor and humble in spirit, willing to drink from that fountain of divine love which the angel is here opening.

It was necessary that the very first note of the sermon should be comforting and reassuring, lest the hearers, prostrated and paralyzed by fright, should fail to comprehend the significance of the divine proclamation. "Fear not!" It is not for the purpose of meting out punishment that the angel has appeared.

What a joyful message for this wicked, sin-cursed world, where both the divine Word and conscience convict all of wrong-doing and announce to them that what they deserve is eternal doom! We are so constantly in touch with sin and crime, both in ourselves and others, that our senses have become blunted to the heinousness of wrong-doing and the dread nature of its legitimate results. But when the quiet hour is upon us and we reflect a little on what we are and what we should be, on things done and things not done, when the past becomes alive and with lightninglike swiftness brings forward numerous occasions and events that hurl accusations at us, then even the stout heart begins to quail and to tremble in guilty fear. To all you sinners who with sorrow realize your sinful condition comes the heavenly message, "Fear not."

2.

The angel has come, not to curse or smite, but to announce good things. "For, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Good tidings. Let that sink into our hearts this morning. When the physician announces to you as

you are anxiously watching at the sick-bed of a loved one that the crisis is passed and the situation is very hopeful, that is good news. When the prisoner in the penitentiary is visited by the warden and is handed a letter from the governor announcing to him pardon and freedom, that is good news. Ah! to the shepherds and to us, sitting in the depressing gloom caused by our guilty consciences and the wrath of the Almighty, comes the announcement: Good news for you!

And, mark well, no one is excepted. "Which shall be to all people." Here, for once, all distinctions of class and race and color fade away. Here the wretched outcast, the despised sinner, and the condemned criminal find themselves placed on a par with martyrs and saints. It is the glory of the Christmas Gospel that it sends a ray of light and hope even into the blackest existence.

Now, by all means, let us hear the good news. The angel says: "For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." That is the good tidings. Something has happened. A child has been born in the city of David, that is, in Bethlehem, and that child is a Savior. Oh, open wide the portals of your heart to receive this message: a Savior is born to you!

Do we grasp the meaning of it? Savior! We have heard and spoken the word so often that it no longer thrills us as it should. The man who, having fallen into a river, was rescued from a watery grave by the heroic efforts of a bystander; the merchant who met with crushing business reverses and was able to avert bankruptcy only through the generous intervention of a wealthy friend; the prisoner who, unjustly condemned to die on the gallows, was aided by a kind relative, so that he could prove his innocence, — these people appreciate the meaning of the word *Savior*. The use of the term presupposes a grave peril from which we are unable to extricate ourselves.

The shepherds knew what was meant by the word. Poor they were, but that was not their chief complaint. The struggle for the daily bread was cruel and bitter, but it could be endured. But what filled them with a worry for which there was no human cure, what touched them in their inmost souls with feelings of agony and sorrow, was the realization of their sin and its consequences. There was their wrong-doing, there was the wrath of the great God; neither could be denied. And both had created a situation draped in the blackness of despair. O for a Savior from sin and hell! Such was the sigh of their anxious heart. The messenger from heaven announces in words so gracious: "To you is born a Savior." Oh, was that not good tidings?

My friends, to you, too, is wafted this message: "To you is born this day a Savior," a Savior from sin and damnation. What are your wants — food, shelter, clothes, friends? Yes, but after all, these are not of first importance. It has been very truly said, "Man

needs but little here below nor needs that little long." But when you think of your relation to the great Head of the universe, of the existence beyond the grave, extending throughout all eternity, of the mansion in Paradise which you forfeited through iniquity, of the sad future awaiting the enemies of God throughout the endless ages that are before you, then the one great cry is for a Savior from sin and death and from the terrors of damnation. Such a Savior has been born to you. Rejoice, sinner. Let it be the one great truth you will dwell on to-day. Take it along into life's battle and cherish it.

A child has been born. The Savior is but a babe. In fact, the angel says to the shepherds: "This shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." It cannot be denied that the person who was proclaimed as the Savior was at that time a weak, helpless infant, born amid circumstances that betokened lowliness and poverty.

But instead of turning away with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulder and declaring the idea preposterous that this Infant might be the Rescuer of the human race from the eternal doom, let us view the vast significance of that mean condition and wretchedness. The great Apostle Paul explains this weakness and poverty. He says in words aglow with the deepest feeling: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich." Ah! that absence of pomp and show, that lowliness, that manger bed, these things are all far from accidental. It is thus that the great work of saving us is being begun.

Ponder the teaching of the Scriptures on this point. We stand here before a pair of balances, as it were. The one side contains a colossal load, our iniquity, which apparently can never be outweighed. As for the other side, that little Child in the manger is appointed to undertake the stupendous task of filling it with sufficient weight to overcome the downward pull of that mountain of guilt. Behold, that Child is losing no time. Even now it is placing large boulders into its side of the scales. Its poverty and distress are to help outweigh the load of our sins. In other words, even now He is paying the price for us. His poverty is to be our riches; His humiliation, our glorification. The exchange, which will be our theme throughout the blessed eternity, is beginning, our guilt is being laid on Jesus, and we are receiving His innocence, His righteousness.

3.

Let us not overlook that the angel adds to his announcement of the birth of the Savior: "which is Christ the Lord." No question is more natural than this, Will that Child be able to accomplish its

all-important, marvelous mission? If He were merely the son of Joseph and Mary, then the task would be too great for Him. But He is "Christ the Lord." He is the Christ, that is, He is that great personage of whose coming the pages of the Old Testament contained many a prophecy, the Messiah, the Anointed of God. And He is the Lord, that is, the great God Himself. It is true that Mary is His mother, as the text states. But His Father is the almighty Ruler of heaven and earth, who sent His Son to this earth in great love. Very explicit are the statements of the Scriptures which testify that His mother was a virgin and that it was through the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit that He was conceived and born.

Here we are facing a tremendous mystery, baffling to the greatest thinker and sage. This Child is the true God? Our reason is utterly perplexed and even feels outraged at this idea. But brush aside all considerations advanced by your intellect in its vanity and conceit. The messenger of God proclaims: The Lord is born. He does not lie. The emperor Augustus was powerful; note how his decree is obeyed. But this Child is still more powerful. See His servants coming down from heaven to sing His praises.

Realizing the limitations of our little minds and subjecting our judgment to the Word of Him who is all-knowing and ever true, let us with childlike faith accept that message: The Child of Bethlehem is Christ the Lord. Then the question, Will He be able to pay for my sins? will no longer torment us; since He is God, the very gates of hell have to yield to His power.

Friends, we have briefly considered the angel's Christmas sermon. It contains elements which no human mind can fathom, but it also offers a balm which can heal every sore. Rejoice, rejoice, at the news of the coming of the Redeemer. Come to that manger in Bethlehem and say, My Lord! my Savior! and your Christmas will be a blessed one. Amen. W. Arndt.

New Year's Eve.

1 Pet. 1, 24. 25.

First uttered by Isaiah in a vision. Is. 40, 6—8. No strange, unfamiliar proclamation. The tolling knell that sounds its muffled tones from the church's spire, that somber procession carrying one of earth's pilgrims to his last resting-place, every change of season in nature's annual round, the tearing off of one leaf after another from the calendar of the year's rolling weeks and months till the date of to-day bids us discard the whole, just so many solemn and constant monitors of the rapidity of time's flight. In the text these evidences of the transitoriness of all earthly things is contrasted by something of perpetual and abiding endurance, affording precious instruction.

1. All flesh is as grass.

Note, not as the oak or some firm and compact monarch of the woods that for years has defied the fury of the elements and at last, after long and repeated assaults, gradually decays or, cut down by the woodman's ax, sinks slowly to the ground. Idea is that it quickly withereth. Especially so in oriental countries. Sudden and tremendous heat. This imagery of Scripture sustained by testimony of experience. No sooner born than we begin to draw to our end. World has made great progress: better homes, more diffused knowledge, splendid improvements and facilities. Only incidental and attendant circumstances, the essential and fundamental conditions of our existence unaltered. Still, and ever will be, a solid, unchangeable law. No fountain of perpetual youth. Everywhere visible the grim and ghastly trophies of the "universal conqueror." The mighty pyramids of Egypt, those stupendous monuments of man's skill and labor, to the thickening gravestones in our churchyards, speak in chiseled language: "All flesh is as grass." No exception, but a difference. Times when grass withers quickly, times when it stands for a while, delighting the eye with its verdure; yea, seasons when it lasts till the chilly breezes of autumn sweep over the scene. So in the history of man. Lovely little cherub forms withdrawn in tenderest infancy. Others grown in stature, promising, bid early farewell, leaving bleeding hearts and an aching void. Still others, advancing in age, form connections, frame busy schemes, tenderest affections gather around them; then the lonely couch of suffering and the dark dress of mourning. Quote examples. And even if to the allotted period of three score years and ten, "soon cut off, and we fly away." Unrelenting, universal truth. Yet deserving to be stated, that it may have some practical effect.

2. The glory of man as the flower of the grass.

As the most beautiful, so the flower is the most delicate part of a plant. The slightest accident, a rude blast, untender touch, may destroy it. Equally fragile, delicate, the glory of man, that is, all that man glories in — health, wealth, talent, rank, influence. These the flowers on the stem of humanity. How easily blasted! Health, — a fever's breath, some malignant disease, an accident, — how rapidly departed! Talent — of Sir Isaac Newton, that great genius, it is said he could not in after-years comprehend his own axioms. Duke of Wellington could not recall names of generals that fought with him at the Battle of Waterloo, much less the maneuvers. Examples from own experience. Wealth — what scrambling and straining to obtain the little heaps of golden dust; even when one has secured and is wise enough to rightly use it, witness the hand that traces the letters of his name in signing his last will, transmitting it to others. So fame and rank. Mighty rulers of the past. Nebuchadnezzar,

Napoleon. Greatness vanished into thin air; on tomb written: "Thus passeth glory of the world." So with that flower, the common desire of so many, pleasure. Solomon: "vanity and vexation of spirit." Lord Chesterfield. Does nothing endure?

3. The Word of the Lord endureth.

Like a rock, on firm base and raising its rugged head solidly amid the surging, fluctuating waters of the sea, so amid the changing, fluctuating scenes of earth. Still what it was when Adam heard its first sounds amid trees of Eden, when God conversed with Abraham, Jacob, David, Isaiah, and Daniel, when preached by John the Baptist and apostles. Still what it was when we were young. Many changes with us, in us, around us. Examples. One thing, like its Author, never changes — His Word.

"And that is the Gospel preached unto you." Incorruptible. V. 23. If the seed of regeneration has taken root in our hearts, then we shall outlive corruption, for upon our souls is stamped that which is incorruptible. On this last evening of the year when, as it were, we can hear its dying breath passing over the withered fields of 365 days and repeating with a pathos that must touch every reflecting mind, "All flesh is as grass," let each and every one put before him and her that question of questions: Have I been born again? Am I a Christian? What is the object of my thoughts, hopes, affections, conduct? The things of this perishing life or of the life that abideth, treasures upon earth or in heaven? That a question which can only be answered by each one in the closet of his own heart and conscience, but the question which on a day like this takes precedence of any other, a day which marks for every one of us the close of another lap in our brief journey across the fields of time towards the gate of the eternal world. Live for God, in and with the Word of God. Let it be your guide-book, inspiration, comfort, and delight. When world's bloom is gone, a realm where those who have lived God-fearing, useful lives on earth, in blessedness shall live forever. L. Buchheimer.

New Year's Day.

Luke 2, 21.

When a mariner has lost his path upon the lone and trackless ocean, when his vessel is tossed by the angry winds and waves, no shore appears in sight and no compass can fix his location, if he can succeed in discovering one particular star, the pole-star, he can secure his bearings. To such a storm-beaten mariner man may be compared. Seated in a frail canoe, he is being irresistibly carried forward on the whirling current of the stream of time; the shore from which

he set out in infancy is long faded out of sight; no map tells of the location of the land whither he is steering on the broad expanse of time; yet if he can focus his telescope, the telescope of Christian faith, upon one bright luminary, the guiding pole-star, then, however the waves of life's dispensation may rise and the winds rage, he has a definite aim, a safe and solid mooring, and can continue his route with cheerfulness and confidence of heart. That star, the Unchangeable One, the same (Heb. 13, 8) — Jesus. In different applications.

1. Our Guiding Star in Church, occupation, and home.

His divine name the Church raises before us on this first day of the year. Her mission is not to teach science, philosophy, etc., but to set forth His glorious doctrines. All services, Scripture-lessons, point to Him. His life-giving Word resounds from this pulpit. In His blessed name Baptism, confirmation, betrothals, Holy Communion, prayers. Shall have occasion to mention other names: Moses, Elijah, Paul, John; but only as directing to Him. So in our callings. At the beginning of civil year man of business opens up a new ledger; entire machinery of human operation, with its thousand different wheels and cog-wheels, begins to clatter and move anew. Not forget one thing. Begin in His name upon whose blessing everything is resting. "Whatsoever ye do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." At His word cast out the net of earthly engagements. Jesus for business partner and embody prayer upon undertakings among rules and regulations. In the home. Blessed the home where man and wife live, work, pray together in His name. Josh. 24, 15.

O blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of Joy He is,
Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.

2. Our Guide in Joy and Sorrow, Life and Death.

Veiled in impenetrable mist, the virgin year lies outstretched before us. Evolutions and revolutions continually going on in society, political, commercial, financial spheres. So with us personally changes take place. Wishing one another a happy New Year. May God grant realization of fondest desires, health to body, peace and contentment in home, delight in your children, success in enterprises. In the midst of all let Jesus be your one and your all. In times of prosperity apt to forget God. Days of plenty dispose us to abuse God's gifts in vanity, pride. The spirit which St. Paul describes in the lines: "But godliness," etc. Chief happiness that of the soul, that inward joy which springs from acknowledging God in all things, accepting them from His beneficent hand, employing them in the proper spirit and to the proper end.

In sorrow. That were a strange year which should bring us no trouble. As well look for a year of undimmed sunshine, without clouds or rain. In like manner gloomy days and sleepless nights, withered joy and blighted hope, tears and distressing trials, sickness, unkindness, treachery, betrayal of confidence, will come. What does the Christian say to such prospects? He trusts in the name of Jesus and "fears no evil." He knows "in whom he has believed." The name of Jesus is his comfort, stay, and peace. Unshaken trust and resignation.

In hour of death. Final messenger may come during present year. Tradition tells of one whose desire was to sit at a king's banquet. His wish was granted. Before him a table decked with the choicest viands and everything about him showing wealth and splendor. Happened to look up and saw a naked sword suspended over his head by a single hair. So death. How meet it? Leaning on what rod or staff? The name of Jesus, faith in His merits and meditation, the only sure refuge and only secure hope.

This is the time of resolves. With eye on the text, let us resolve one thing; that will cover all else: from the first of January to the thirty-first of December to live in Jesus, with Jesus, for Jesus. To that resolve may God speak His approving Amen!

L. BUCHHEIMER.

Epiphany.

Matt. 2, 1—12.

No story of Holy Writ since our infancy more fascinating to us and concerning which we so much desire to know more than the story of the Epiphany Gospel. It forms an integral part, an indispensable tableau, in the holiday season now closing. Let us note each part of the narrative and take to heart its lessons.

1. The Magi.

Men of high learning. Frequent mention of magi in the Bible. Interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh in Joseph's day. Performed miracles on small scale at Moses' appearance at court. Daniel in Babylon.

Men of high rank. "We three kings of Orient are." Epiphany in German termed "festival of three kings." Nothing of this stated in Holy Scripture. May have been petty princes, sheiks. Inference from offerings that they were men of ample means. Number traditional. Country probably Arabia, Persia. Lesson: 1 Cor. 1, 26. Majority of our Lord's followers not worldly-wise nor mighty. His more immediate disciples humble, unpretentious fishermen, publicans. Still, not exclusively from low state. Some, by the grace and power

of God, overcame the difficulties and the pride of intellect and exalted station and found place at the foot of the cross — Zacchaeus; Joseph of Arimathea; Nicodemus; treasurer of Queen Candace; Daniel, prime minister of 127 provinces. From Constantine, first Christian emperor, to Gustavus Adolphus. Some of present-day dignitaries devout Christians; our President. Many of earth's deepest thinkers and erudite students sincere believers. Astronomers like Copernicus and Kepler; scientists, Newton and Liebig; physicians, Boerhave and Kelly; statesmen, Bismarck, Gladstone, Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster. Not true what prejudice so often expresses, that Christianity is limited to the ranks of the illiterate, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, that greatest thinkers have been infidels and atheists. Such vaunting speech usually proceeds from tongues that are the loose instruments of an immature mind.

2. The star.

Neither proper nor profitable to tread our way through the perplexing labyrinth of all sorts of conjectures. Our belief that it was supernatural. "His star." Not so remote as the starry vault; apparently traveled in a straight line, not in a circle; from north to south, Jerusalem to Bethlehem; probably visible in the daytime. How did wise men connect it with Jesus' birth? Ancient nations acquainted with each other. Jews scattered abroad by various captivities; with them expectation of the Messiah. Daniel, one of the wisest of the magi in Babylon, a confessor of his faith. Then, too, a general expectation of a great deliverer. Also God's impulse, like in Simeon's case, induced the Wise Men, attracted by brilliant radiance, to leave home.

3. The search.

Earnest and persevering. Leave family and pursuits. Wearisome, dangerous journey. Throughout discouraging. Residents of Jerusalem ignorant of birth; regard inquiry with surprise and mystification. When at Herod's court, information is obtained from scribes. Though but a short distance of six miles, the Jewish students of the Law felt not enough interest to accompany them. Withdrawal of star most perplexing. They persevere. Annually we find them where divine Child was. Why Church sets them so prominently before us. They were Gentiles. At Christmas everything has a Jewish aspect: parents of Jesus, town, shepherds, circumcision in Temple, Simeon, Anna. Jesus was born for "all people." January 6 styled "the Gentiles' Christmas," even as Christmas season ends with the adoration of the Wise Men. Significant. Christianity has made its greatest conquest among nations of uncircumcised. The Wise Men the first-fruits of the great harvest-field of the heathen. Foreign Missions.

4. The gifts.

Did not come empty-handed. Gold, noblest ore of the earth. Frankincense, myrrh; costly, highly prized treasures, carefully chosen; not only a few nuggets or scant pieces. Symbolic; stand for something and teach something. There are those who flatter themselves that, if the Lord were again in the manger, they would fall down before Him and open their treasures. Is with us, in even a grander sense; for we have Him not only in His humiliation, but in His exaltation. If our hearts are right towards Him, we shall give Him the same recognition. Material treasure, earthly substance, money, the means to carry on Lord's work. Envelopes. — *Frankincense,* symbol of prayer. Prayer to Him, in His name, the only acceptable prayer. No Christianity, no real piety, if we do not fall down before Him like the Wise Men. What 1930 needs is men and women who will pray 365 days. *Myrrh,* bitter, yet useful and valuable. Emblem of self-denial. Wise Men brought sacrifices. What have we denied ourselves for Christ's sake? What distances have we traveled to come to worship Him? And is it without regret of our time, expenses, inconveniences? Present-day religion in large degree a matter of extreme ease, yielding to least resistance. Call for a measure of our time, ability, voice, personal presence, cooperation, meets with endless excuses. These men were wise men. May they find many wise imitators! May our meditation inspire, encourage us!

L. Buchheimer.

First Lenten Outline.

Matt. 26, 30—35. 5C.

"We preach Christ and Him crucified"; such is the motto of every true Lutheran preacher. "Christ" is the one great theme expounded during the entire church-year. Sunday after Sunday the hearers are directed to Him as the only Savior and Redeemer of sinful mankind. Thus it must be, for "neither is there salvation in any other," etc. The preacher who preaches a Christless sermon is not true to his trust; on the part of the preacher a Christless sermon is wasted energy, on the part of the hearer, wasted time.

It is during the Lenten season especially that our hearts and minds are directed to this Christ. It is during this season that we assemble under the cross of Calvary and there behold this Christ working out the salvation of man by suffering and dying as all men's Substitute, appeasing the wrath of an offended God and rendering a full and complete satisfaction for the sins of mankind.

The purpose of these special services, then, is not to open the fountain of compassionate tears by picturing the tortures and pains, the cruelties and agonies, inflicted upon the Savior. To attain this purpose would be a simple matter; for

"Tell me, ye, who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?" (Hymn 209, 2.)

No, the twofold purpose of these our services is: in the first place, we are to be brought to the knowledge that we are the cause of all such woe, and, in the second place, we are to realize and accept the redemption in Christ in true faith.

With this purpose in view, then, we shall accompany our blessed Savior at least part of the way of His great Passion. Our text to-day presents —

Our Savior on the Road to the Mount of Olives.

1. *He reveals to his disciples his impending death and its effect upon them.*
2. *He comforts them.*

1.

V. 30. Having eaten the passover with His disciples and having instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn of praise. It was customary among the Jews to sing Psalms 113 to 118 at the close of the Passover, a hymn known as "the great Hallel." We have no reason to assume that it was some other hymn of praise than the customary one; had it been a different one, the evangelist surely would have recorded it. Having concluded this hymn, Jesus left for the Mount of Olives with His disciples. An important walk, for it ended in death.

A) While wending their way through dingy streets, Jesus reveals to His disciples His impending death. Jesus had often spoken of His suffering and death, even in detail. Luke 18, 31—33. To allay any doubt in the minds of the disciples, Jesus always, when speaking of His impending suffering and death, referred to the writings of the prophets. Ps. 22; Is. 53. So here. He refers them to the prophecy Zech. 13, 7, a prophecy which is to be literally fulfilled this very night. Prophecy is the revelation of God's will. His suffering, in conformity with God's will, decreed by God. See Zech. 13, 7. Cp. with Acts 2, 23. God awakens the sword of His wrath against the Son of His love. Give a brief presentation of God's counsel, according to hymn 191, 1. 2. See also hymn 209.

B) The effect of this revelation upon the disciples.

a) v. 31 a. "Ye shall be offended because of Me." The plan of salvation cannot be understood by man. Natural man, instead of singing a hymn of praise as a token of gratitude for such counsel of

love, John 3, 16, is affected in an altogether different way. What was the effect of such revelation upon the disciples? The all-seeing eyes of the Savior looked into the innermost recesses of the hearts of the disciples, and there he read: "Ye shall be offended because of Me this night," because of the things which will come to pass this night, bound, falsely accused, smitten, scourged, condemned, etc. Because they followed their own reason, they had not the correct conception of the Messiah nor of His purpose. Such offense is identical with unbelief.

b) Another effect of Christ's suffering and death was (v. 31 b): "They shall be scattered abroad." Fear that they would meet the same fate as their Master prompted them to flee and desert Jesus.

Application: Following our own human reason, the message of Christ's suffering and death, the whole Gospel, is foolishness unto us.

Satan is ever on the alert and ready to sow the seed of doubt and unbelief.

Warn Christians against this offense, and many will prove to be Peters, presumptuous. Vv. 33—35. Finally will flee from Jesus, desert Him.

2.

A) V. 32. When we see and hear of the damnableness of sin, we, too, are tempted to flee, if it were possible, from our conscience and from the wrath of God. But thanks be to God, for Jesus tells us: v. 32. Why does Jesus always, when speaking of His suffering and death, call our attention to His resurrection? See text, v. 32; Luke 18, 33. Because the climax of the whole work of redemption is the resurrection. 'Tis only in the light of the resurrection of Christ that we behold the blessedness of Christ's suffering and death. Without the resurrection there is no redemption. 1 Cor. 15, 17 ff.; Rom. 4, 25. The resurrection is the seal of divine approval on the entire work of redemption.

B) Though they will be scattered, He will go before them. He assures them of His love and His care: "I will go before you in Galilee," *i. e.,* Though you forsake Me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will raise you up again; you shall not perish, I shall go before you as a shepherd goes before his flock; I will lead you through all the perils of life to the gates of paradise.

Conclusion. — Let us not only view the Passion of Christ; that would drive us to despair. Let us rather look beyond Calvary, into Joseph's garden, and there behold the Risen One, who was raised for our justification. Look to Him who has gone before us, not only risen from the dead, but ascended into heaven, there to prepare a dwelling-place for us.

R. H. C. Meyer.

Second Lenten Outline.

Matt. 26, 40. 41.

The Lord had foretold the disciples His impending death and the effect it would have upon them. And as the Lord and His disciples were walking towards the Mount of Olives, whither He had often gone to pray, His disciples assured Him of their loyalty, even unto death. Arriving at the entrance of the garden called Gethsemane, located on the mountain slope, the Lord bade his disciples to remain while He went into the inner part of the garden. Three of His disciples were to accompany Him, Peter, John, and James, the three who had been eye-witnesses of His transfiguration.

We shall omit to describe the scene enacted here when agony and anguish encompassed the Lord. Let it suffice to say that the Lord, in order to steel Himself for the coming ordeal, with its accompanying tortures and experiences decreed by a just and holy God, withdrew from His three disciples to pray. Between His prayers He returns to His disciples; but, alas! He finds them asleep — asleep, while He, for whom and with whom they had expressed a willingness to die was treading that wine-press alone. He arouses them, saying: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." These words of our Lord shall engage our attention this evening.

The Suffering Savior's Admonition to His Sleepy Disciples.

1. A warning against temptation; and

2. A remedy to overcome temptation.

1.

In our last Lenten meditation we heard the Lord tell His disciples that they would all be offended because of Him. The events of the night and the following day would blast their hopes, and their faith in Him would receive a severe shock.

A) The troubles of Christ were temptations to His disciples, a) to disbelieve and distrust Him, b) to deny and desert Him, c) to renounce all relation to Him.

B) The cause of this temptation. "Enter not." a) Not an external cause, but b) an internal one. Jesus had repeatedly spoken to them of His death. Luke 18, 31 f. He had referred them to the prophecies of the Old Testament (Matt. 26, 31), and yet the disciples would be offended. Why? aa) They had not learned to subject their own reason and understanding to the Word of God. bb) They neither realized the damnableness of sin nor the necessity of the death of Jesus.

C) Thus it is to this day. Men are offended at the very essence of Christianity, *i. e.*, a suffering Savior, the vicarous atonement. They

are tempted by their own reason and understanding. The Gospel of the Crucified is foolishness unto them. The fundamental doctrine of Christianity, "One for all," is offensive to them.

2.

A) The Savior, being the omniscient God, knew of the danger threatening the faith of His disciples and therefore admonished them to "watch," *i. e.,* to be on their guard a) against sleepiness, indifference, b) against their own reason (see German hymn-book, No. 241, 1).

Application. — Guard against the modern gospel, guard against self-righteousness.

B) "With might of ours naught can be done, soon were our loss effected"; therefore "pray." Satan is cunning, will employ renowned pulpit orators to sow the seed of doubt; therefore pray a) for firmness and steadfastness (German hymn-book, 241, 3), b) for childlike faith, c) for strength to withstand and overcome temptation.

Application. — Explanation of Sixth Petition. Hymn 381.

R. H. C. Meyer.

Third Lenten Outline.

Mark 14, 36.

Great, indeed, were the sufferings of soul which the Lord experienced in Gethsemane. The very words employed by the Holy writer tell of the greatness of His agony and anguish. *Lypeisthai kai ademonein,* to be sorrowful and in a consternation; the latter word signifies a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desirous of it. "I am exceeding sorrowful," *perilypos, i. e.,* encompassed about on all hands, surrounded by, enveloped in, sorrow.

The cause of this sorrow? a. He now engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness. Cf. Luke 22, 53. The Prince of this World has come, John 14, 30—31; he is rallying his forces, preparing for an assault, the battle will be decisive. The Serpent makes its fiercest assault on the Seed of the woman and directs its sting, the sting of death, to His very heart. b. He is now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon Him; it was a suffering for all the sins of all the world. He knew the malignity of this sin, how provoking to God, how ruining to man. Such was the cause why He "was sorrowful and very heavy." It bends Him to the ground, and He seeks comfort in prayer. Thus we find our suffering Savior on His knees in prayer. Let us then consider: —

Let us inquire —

The Humble Prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane.

1. What He prays for, and *2. How He prays.*

1.

A) To whom does He pray?

Text, "Abba, Father." He addresses Himself to God. The Syriac word is here retained, which signifies "Father," to intimate what an emphasis our Lord laid upon it. It bespeaks childlike love and trust. Cf. Rom. 8, 15: "Those who have the Spirit of adoption shall say, Abba." Jesus holds God at His word, "Thou art My beloved Son."

"All things are possible unto Thee," He glorifies His heavenly Father as the omnipotent God.

B) The prayer itself.

a) "Take away this cup from Me." He begs a favor. He calls His suffering a cup. Great as the suffering is and will be, it is not a bottomless pit, not fathomless as the sea. He will not be annihilated by it. But, nevertheless, it is a bitter cup, for it contains the fulness of God's wrath, which must be drained and means death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; "the wages of sin is death." At the thought of this, He shrinks back and therefore begs that the Father take this cup from Him, in other words, He prays that He might be spared the suffering now on hand. This petition of Jesus intimates that He is true man. It shows that He was "taken from among men," Heb. 5, 1, and that He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" and "tempted like as we are." Heb. 4, 15. Christ admitted and expressed a reluctance to suffer.

b) However, He adds the proviso, as another evangelist records: "If it be possible." This proviso changes the entire aspect of His prayer. "If it be possible," *i. e.,* if His Father may be glorified, if man may be saved, if the work of redemption may be accomplished, without His drinking this bitter cup, He desires to be spared, otherwise not. (See Stoeckhardt, *Passionspredigten,* p. 31 f.)

c) "Nevertheless . . . Thou wilt." Willingly and gladly He submits to the will of God. Even the human will of Christ, being sinless, is not averse to the will of God. He will not permit His will to run counter to His Father's will. God wills that all should be saved, and to carry out this will, He is willing to submit. Therefore He offered Himself and gave Himself for us. Did it with delight. Ps. 40, 7—8; John 6, 39—40; John 4, 34. See hymn 191, 3.

What an example of reliance upon the correctness and the righteousness of the Father's will! Let us imitate it in all exigencies of life.

2.

He prays—

A) In deep humility, v. 35, a) to render satisfaction for our pride; b) to give us an example. Matt. 23, 12; 1 Pet. 5, 5; Ps. 51, 17.

B) With firm confidence. The words of Christ's prayer leave no room for doubt, they breathe absolute trust.

C) With willing submission to the will of God. Now Rom. 8, 15; Gal. 4, 6. Note, however, 1 John 5, 14; Matt. 8, 2.

D) He perseveres in prayer. Vv. 35. 39. 41. Note Jas. 5, 16 b; Rom. 12, 12 c.

Lord, give us perseverance in prayer, humility in prayer, confidence in prayer, submission in prayer. R. H. C. MEYER.

Fourth Lenten Outline.

Luke 22, 47. 48.

One of the darkest blots on the pages of our country's glorious history is the story of Benedict Arnold. There is nothing so vile and disgusting as one who is a traitor to his country. Words fail to describe the depth of depravity to which a man must stoop when he betrays his country, which gives him a livelihood, protection, etc.

And yet such betrayal of one's country is nothing compared with that related in our text, which tells us that a disciple betrayed his Master, yea, his God.

Judas, the Betrayer of the Savior.

Let me depict to you —

1. The great sin of Judas against the Savior;

2. The great love of the Savior to Judas.

1.

V. 47. Jesus had steeled Himself by prayer for the events which were to take place in quick succession in that very night. Returning from His prayers to His sleeping and indifferent disciples, He admonishes them to watch and pray, that they may not enter into temptation. And then, we are told: "While He yet spake, the multitude came," soldiers commissioned by the Roman government, now in the employ of the high priests, scribes, Pharisees, and elders of the people. At their helm marched the worst scoundrel ever born, the traitor.

A) Who was he?

a) Judas Iscariot. A Judean, a man from Kerioth (Josh. 15, 25).

b) "One of the Twelve." A disciple, chosen by Jesus as an apostle, one who with the others had confessed: "Thou art the Son of the living God"; one who in Christ's name had performed miracles; one who had forsaken all for Jesus' sake.

c) A covetous man; see John 12, 4—6. With the desire for money Satan had entered his heart and soon dominated it.

d) Sin was not isolated in the heart of Judas. Covetousness led to hypocrisy. It led him into bad company. He became a thief. But that is not the worst.

B) What did he do?

He betrayed his Lord and Master, his Savior, for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver.

a) By betraying Jesus, Judas knowingly and wilfully rejected Christ, the Son of God. That He was the Son of God, of that there could be no doubt in the heart of Judas; for he betrayed Him at the very moment when Jesus shone forth in divine majesty, smiting the mob to the ground with the omnipotent "I am He."

b) Judas betrayed Jesus after he had tasted of the love of Jesus. He had been a true disciple of Christ; otherwise Christ would never have chosen him as an apostle. He had borne testimony of Christ and for Christ. Christ had dwelt in the heart of Judas. In betraying Christ, Judas cast Jesus out violently, not in ignorance, but wilfully.

c) Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, the token of friendship and love thus being prostituted. "The kiss was a customary expression of mingled affection and reverence on the part of the disciples when they met their Master." Was there ever a love-token so desecrated and abused? Oh, the depth to which Judas had fallen!

Application. — We condemn Judas for his treachery, and rightly so. But remember that many a disciple of Christ, many a Christian, who had tasted the love and grace of Jesus betrayed Him, sold Him for the shekles of worldly lust and pleasure, traded Jesus for filthy lucre. Worldly-mindedness, membership in antichristian societies. Have you pressed the kiss of Judas upon those blessed lips of the Savior in any way? Oh, though you have, 'tis not yet too late, for behold the love of the Savior for Judas!

2.

V. 48: "Judas" (*i. e.,* the confessor, the praiser, of God), "betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

A) Jesus knew the purpose of Judas's coming in that night. Had He not told His disciples that one of them would betray Him? Matt. 26, 21. He pointed out Judas as His betrayer. Matt. 26, 25. Yet Jesus made no attempt to escape, He rather suffered such betrayal. Why? His great love for sinful man. He is the second Joseph, who, like Joseph of old, was betrayed and sold to save His brethren.

B) Jesus also proves His great love for Judas.

a) He calls him by name. What love and compassion is revealed in this address of Judas!

b) "Betrayest thou the *Son of Man?*" Reminds him that He

has left the throne of majesty, that He is God of God, the Only-begotten of the Father, made man, made of a woman, made under the Law, that He might redeem them that were under the Law, Gal. 4, 4; a work which He has just now undertaken — the Son of Man who came to save that which was lost, who came to save also Judas. This Son of Man, this Savior, offers mercy to His traitor! What love!

c) Jesus had warned Judas before. Matt. 26, 24. That had been of no avail. Now the deed was done. And yet Jesus assures Judas that even now there is forgiveness for him. But alas, Judas did not accept the grace that was offered him. He hurled himself, body and soul, into hell.

Application. — As Jesus loved Judas, so He loves all sinners. He is even now the Son of Man who has come to save. If you have betrayed Him, oh, despair not! He assures you of His forgiveness in the Gospel. John 1, 29; 3, 16; Is. 1, 18. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. R. H. C. MEYER.

Fifth Lenten Outline.

Luke 22, 49—53.

Jesus had been betrayed by His disciple Judas. As soon as the traitor's kiss had been given, the mob sprang forward to lay hands on Him. The disciples who had been willing to die with and for their Master, now thoroughly aroused from their sleepiness, were ready to redeem their pledge and asked: "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Before the Lord could reply, the tempestuous Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. After rebuking Peter for his rashness and attempted murder in no mistakable terms and thus teaching him that the battles of the Lord are not to be fought with weapons of steel, but with the Sword of the Spirit, the Lord embraces this opportunity of once more manifesting His divine majesty by touching the ear of the servant and healing it. Thereupon He addressed the multitude, and thus we find in our text

The Lord's Powerful Sermon in Gethsemane Addressed to the Mob.

Let us consider —

1. The preacher; 2. The audience; 3. The sermon.

1.

The preacher is Jesus; for we read, "Then Jesus said."

A) Jesus is the Son of God. Had just proved His divinity by healing the ear of the servant. Previously by His omnipotent "I am He."

B) Jesus is the Prophet sent by God to reveal God's will to man.

a) Prophecies as such. Deut. 18, 15.

b) Acknowledged as such by the Father. Matt. 17, 5.

c) Speaks with divine authority. John 1, 18.

2.

A) Representatives of the Church —

a) The chief priests, whose duty it was to bring sacrifices for the people and thus reconcile God.

b) Captains of the Temple. No captains in a military sense, but such as superintended the guard of priests and Levites, who kept watch by night in the Temple, an institution of early date. Cp. 2 Kings 12, 9; 25, 18.

c) Elders, members of the Sanhedrin, the highest church court of the time.

B) Representatives of the state — soldiers of the Roman government, Gentiles, unbelievers, representatives of the children of this world. As soldiers undoubtedly guilty of the sins commonly ascribed to this class of men.

Thus we find the entire human race represented in Gethsemane, "saint" and sinner; "Church" and world have bound Jesus and made Him prisoner. All human beings have contributed to the death of Jesus, all have sinned. Even the best Christians, even those holding high office in the Church, are guilty. "There is no difference, all have sinned," etc. Rom. 3, 23. Hymn 205, 3—5.

3.

A) Jesus exposes the malignity of the mob which has come to take Him. V. 52 b. This inquiry was a reply, a protest, a demurrer, to their tumultuous and disorderly behavior. Though addressed to all in general, the question is addressed to the instigators in particular, to the responsible leaders, chief priests, etc., who had consulted with Judas and conspired to arrest Jesus. Some of them, the impatient ones, the worst fanatics among them, who could not wait at Jerusalem until the captors returned, had accomplished the expedition. Hitherto they had kept themselves in the background, but now they come boldly to the front and feast their gloating eyes upon the Lord. With His usual courage Jesus exposes the injustice of their deed and the exaggeration of their effort to take Him. The apprehension of a thief, robber, or desperate criminal might compel them to go forth with clubs, swords, torches, and justify their creeping through the stillness of the night; but how does He, Jesus, the Savior, He who has only done good, deserve such treatment?

Although the Lord knew and predicted that He was to be treated like a malefactor, He, nevertheless, felt the disgrace and insult;

therefore He says: v. 53 a. He had never given them reason to treat Him as a robber or thief. For three years they searched for a flaw in His character and watched for an improper word, but the sharpest of them found nothing. Jesus could challenge them: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Even the heavenly Father pronounced Him sinless, saying: In Him I am well pleased.

Whatever He said and whatever He did, He did not say and do in secret, but publicly. Always did He walk openly, under their very eyes in the Temple. Luke 19, 47. Not a robber was He, but a Teacher; not a conspirator inciting the masses, but a Prophet proclaiming the will of God, bringing salvation. And never had they stretched forth hands against him.

B) He announces their future doom.

a) What glory the mob may find in its cunning is dashed to pieces by Christ, for He says: v. 53 b. This is the "hour" allowed them to have their will against Him. Now the "power of darkness," Satan, "the ruler of the darkness of this world," is permitted to do his worst, permitted by a higher power and authority. For all this had been decreed. So it was determined. The other evangelists add: "All this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." The far-reaching counsel of God includes the Savior's surrender to the enemies. Acts 2, 23.

b) Their success is only temporary. It is only the means of God to an end. It is but an "hour" that Jesus suffers; when God's plan has been carried out, then the little while of sorrow begets its fruit of never-ending bliss. It is but an "hour" during which the foe is triumphant; then follows light and victory without end. Cf. Matt. 26, 32; John 2, 19.

Application. — Jesus is still the Prophet sent by God. Through the preaching of the Gospel He reveals the will of the Father. When the Gospel is preached, Christ speaks, Luke 10, 16; hearken unto Him. Deut. 18, 15. Oppose the spreading of the Gospel, oppose the Church, and you make Christ a prisoner. You may be successful in your effort; but remember it is only for an "hour," a little while. In the end it will be of no avail, for even the gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ's Church.

Are you opposing the Gospel and the Church by not attending, by keeping others away, by not contributing? Then you have bound Christ. Oh, repent and be warned by the chief priests, captains, and elders of our text! God will require Christ's blood at your hands. Repent and with the centurion confess: Truly, this was a righteous man and the Son of God, and you shall be saved and partake of the fruit of the redemption wrought by Christ. Amen.

R. H. C. Meyer.

Sixth Lenten Outline.

Luke 22, 54—62.

Jesus having been taken captive, was at once dragged before the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Church. There He was tried, if a trial it can be called. And while the trial was in progress, the story related in our text took place. It tells us of —

The Denial of the Savior by His Own Disciple.

Let us consider: —

1. Peter's grievous sin; *2. Peter's sincere repentance.*

1.

A) Who was Peter?

a) A disciple, ardent, zealous; because of his beautiful confession, Matt. 16, 16, he was called *Petros* (v. 18).

b. Experienced great love of Jesus. *a*) Was permitted to be a witness of the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Matt. 17, 1 ff. *b*) Christ prays for him. Luke 22, 32. *c*) Christ warns him, Matt. 26, 34. In spite of all —

B) Peter denies his Lord.

a) Note the climax in his denial — *a*) a simple denial, *b*) a denial confirmed by an oath, *c*) a denial confirmed by an oath and reinforced by a curse.

b) The significance of Peter's sin. — *a*) He rejects His God. *b*) He rejects redemption. *c*) He rejects salvation.

c) The cause of Peter's sin. — *a*) He trusted in himself, in his own strength. *b*) He did not avoid evil associates. *c*) He heeded not the warnings of his Lord.

Application. — Are we better than Peter? 1) Are we courageous in our confession of Christ before men, especially before His enemies? Silence at times is denial. 2) Have we never denied the Lord in our hearts? When doubt as to forgiveness, when evil thoughts and desires, arise in our hearts, when in adversity we fail to put our trust in the Savior, do we not then deny Him? 3) Peter's fall a warning to us. Presumption. Fear of man. From fear to denial is but a step. Heed the warnings of God's Word.

2.

A) Vv. 61. 62. When the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents, they were promised life if they would look up to the brazen serpent erected by Moses. Num. 21, 8. 9. They received life for a look. So Peter. After his shameful denial the Lord passed by; He looked upon Peter; their gaze met, and Peter remembered the words of the Lord: "Before the cock crow," etc. He went out and wept bitterly. In that look Peter found life.

B) He repented. Repentance consists of —

a) Contrition. He remembered his sin; overcome by a godly sorrow; proof of his sorrow, he wept bitterly.

b) Faith in the love of the Master, a love that even after the terrible fall would not reject Peter.

C) Peter was not brought to repentance by any act of his own. It was the voice of warning, of which Peter was reminded by the crowing of the cock, that brought him to repentance. It was the look of Jesus that met Peter's gaze, a look that spoke louder than words, that assured Peter of the Lord's love in spite of his sin.

Peter's repentance, an example for us. If you have fallen, — and you have, — there is still hope. Repent, *i. e.*, acknowledge your sin with a contrite heart. But that is not sufficient; think of Judas. Look to Christ with the eyes of faith. Behold Him who was raised up on Calvary for your sake, look up to Him, and in that look you will find life. For there you will behold "the depth of love, in which, past findings," etc. Hymn 312, 4. R. H. C. MEYER.

Maundy Thursday.

John 13, 1—15.

This narrative of the foot-washing occurs but once in Holy Scriptures. Strange and unusual. Inattentive and opinionated readers have misunderstood it. Some have believed it to be the history of the institution of a sacrament and have blamed those churches that do not practise "foot-washings" in public meetings. Others disapprove of such "foot-washings," but insist that the abolition of it shows that we cannot follow the Bible literally. Again, others go through a kind of ceremony which is to be a foot-washing, for instance, the Pope, and formerly the emperor of Austria.* Again, others have thought that this is one of the difficult parts of Scripture from which we can gain little benefit. All these are in error and belong to that class of people of whom Peter says: 2 Pet. 3, 16.

This is a very important part of Holy Writ and is not at all difficult, but simple and clear. We shall see that if with unbiased minds we now consider according to our text: —

Jesus Washing the Disciples' Feet.

* The old Emperor Franz Josef hired twelve paupers once a year, had them enter his palace, sprinkled a little water on the feet of each one, and wiped them with a towel. These paupers, however, had to be very careful to have their feet washed before they came to the palace. The Pope also, on every Maundy Thursday, sprinkles a few drops of water from a golden bowl upon the feet of twelve cardinals and applies a towel.

This shows us

1. The self-sacrificing humility of Jesus.

a) Can any one deny that this foot-washing is evidence of the Lord's humility? Our text tells us, vv. 3—5: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things," etc. Jesus, to whom was given all power in heaven and in earth, Matt. 28, 18; Jesus, who was fully conscious of all this, condescends to do this very lowly service for those men who were so far beneath Him, not only as His disciples, but as sinners; who were right now on the point of committing shameful sins against Him. Oh, what deep humiliation! Cf. Phil. 2, 7. Simon Peter was appalled and said, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?"

More deeply even than this Jesus humiliated Himself and showed His self-sacrificing love to us when He took our sins and guilt upon Himself and died for us upon the cross. Remember that Jesus was not forced to allow men to spit in His face, but He, having power to lay down His life and to take it again, voluntarily submitted to these humiliations.

b) But Jesus also indicates the purpose of all this humiliation. Text. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." These words indicate the symbolical meaning of Jesus' action. He wished to impress upon the disciples that they needed washing and that He alone could wash them from their sins. Just so we have an uncleanness, worse than any uncleanness of the flesh, the uncleanness of sin. Ps. 51, 7; 1 John 1, 7.

Application. — Have you been washed in that fountain? Zech. 13, 1. Jesus intended that His disciples should search their hearts, examine themselves; for He tells them: "Ye are clean, but not all." Vv. 10. 11. He did not tell which one was unclean, for He wanted them *all to examine themselves.* And just so you to-night! And you are to pray God for cleanness that He may cleanse and forgive you, as David prayed Ps. 51, 7.

2. An example to be followed.

But another purpose in this foot-washing Jesus expressly indicates. Vv. 12—15. Who can be in doubt about this? Jesus expressly says: "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." We are not unnecessarily to wash one another's feet. Oriental ancient custom. 1 Tim. 5, 10. This is not the institution of a sacrament, — for Jesus does not promise that by foot-washing we shall receive forgiveness of sins, — but it is an example of humility which we are to follow. Every Christian is to be willing to perform for his fellow-Christian the lowliest service if it is required. Matt. 25, 34—40.

The Christian life is not to be devoted to self-seeking, allowing others to get along as best they can. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Gen. 4, 9. Pride and selfishness and covetousness and vainglory are

from Satan. By pride our first parents fell. They were not satisfied to be human beings; they wanted to be like unto God. The devil had put this thought into their minds. We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures that we are to be humble and in honor to prefer one another. Rom. 12, 3. 10. 16. The example of Abraham dealing with Lot when there was strife between their herdsmen. Gen. 13. The example of Jacob calling himself a servant of Esau, Gen. 32, when Esau came against him. The meekness of Moses. Num. 12, 3. The humility of David. 2 Sam. 22. Paul, the least of the apostles. 1 Cor. 15, 9. Luther writing the Catechism. Remained in Wittenberg during the plague, visited the sick, however poor.

Application. — Examine yourself. Phil. 2, 3—5. S.

Good Friday.

John 1, 29 b.

On this holy day we have come here to pray: "Behold the Lamb of God," etc. Text. We have come to this house of God to hear. What? "Behold the Lamb," etc. We have come to see and to look, and our text tells us: "Behold the Lamb," etc. What is it that has drawn us here to-day? It is the magnet in this text: "Behold the Lamb," etc. To-day one truth should fill our hearts, the truth of our text: "Behold the Lamb," etc. Oh, that we could invite every one in the world to be with us to-day, not exactly here in this place, but somewhere, and look with us and with us do what our text tells us: "Behold the Lamb," etc. Alas! some will not, but we will. We now gather about this sacrificial Lamb, we will do what God tells us to do through His preacher John the Baptist. We will gaze upon —

Christ the Lamb of God Taking Away the Sin of the World.

1.

To do that as God would have us do it, we should look upon the burden which this Lamb of God is bearing, upon the sin of the world.

A) This sin of the world is an undeniable *reality.* Some have undertaken to deny it, but by this very denial they testify to the fearful corruption of sin in themselves. They are not the first who have tried to tell us that black is white and white is black. But let them cry, Peace! Peace! all they will; there is no peace, but there is sin here. "If we say that we have no sin," etc. 1 John 1, 8. These very people who say that there is no sin accuse us of error and wrong and wickedness and thereby contradict themselves. Our own *conscience* upbraids us, and the very fact that some wish to deny it is merely an effort to hush this testimony. The most upright and the best people are ever the most ready to confess the reality of their sin. Ps. 51; Is. 6, 5; Rom. 7, 19.

The *daily press,* if you can only see, tells of sin when recording the crimes committed, tells of sin in many advertisements, of which those who advertise are not conscious. Our very courts, prisons, asylums, testify to sin. All literature speaks of sin and either invites to it or condemns it. Every lawyer, every physician, every clergyman, can tell about sin. It is one of the first things you notice in your children. Children notice it in their parents. The most godly prayer, the Lord's Prayer, in all its petitions except one deals with sin. The Ten Commandments, the very first thing that the children learn in religion, point it out. Sin — every man knows it is here, the infallible God declares that it is here, every sun shines upon it, every night is full of it. The very crucifixion of Christ and His death, which we are commemorating on this solemn day, would never have happened if there were no sin. You know that your sins are real, my sins are real, and *our sins* were there upon the Lamb of God.

B) And sin is not only a reality, but it is the most fearful reality, because of its *burden and guilt.* You do not behold the Lamb of God as you should if you do not realize to some extent the burden and guilt of sin which He is bearing. The most dreadful thing a person can say is, I have sinned. That does not simply mean, I have made a mistake. Oh, no! It means, I am corrupt, I am rotten. What of it if you hide your sin from the gaze of man, God sees it and knows it. Man might laugh at your sin if he knew it, and still you are afraid to tell him. But God hates sin. To Him it is a stench, worse than any stench on this earth. To Him it is filth, worse than any filth of this earth. To Him it is an insult, more hateful than if you spat into the face of the President of the United States. What if a man who has labored to leave a good name to his children, to his family, through a severe temptation is led to take money and now it is published and all his friends turn from him and all the world points its finger at him as a thief? Isn't that a burden to be borne? Have not many men gone with white hair in sorrow to the grave, bowed down under such a weight of guilt? What if an esteemed woman, who prizes her good name and reputation, is assaulted by powerful temptation, slips, falls, and is disgraced before the world and all point their finger and look askance? Is that not a burden? Is that not fearful guilt? And yet this burden, not of one or of two, but of the world, was upon this one single Lamb of God. Jesus felt all the shame that men or women have ever felt on this earth. He suffered all the pangs of an accusing conscience. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Behold the Lamb," etc. "Ye who think of sin but lightly," etc. Hymn 209, 3. No wonder Jesus fell to the ground in Gethsemane and His sweat became as drops of blood. If men and women swoon because of the consciousness of one disgraceful sin, what must this holy, innocent

Jesus have endured bearing the shame, the guilt, the disgrace, of all sins, even of those of the lowest criminal and of the most filthy sinner! Oh, what a sad Good Friday vision to see the Lamb of God bearing the sins of the world! Made more sad because our sins were there, our sins were added; you added to the burden, I added to the burden.

C) But to the reality of sin and the guilt of sin must be added the *punishment* of sin. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" In order to take it away, He had to bear the wrath of an insulted God. God turned from Him in anger. Therefore the Lamb cries out: "My God, my God," etc. However great our trouble may be, if we can but say, "God is with Me," "God helpeth me," that supports us. But, oh, the hell which he suffers who knows within himself, and tells himself, God has turned against me, the Almighty has become my enemy. The most weird and chilling wail that the voice of man or woman could utter could not sufficiently express the damnation, the darkness, the bottomless woe, of Him who must cry out: "My God, My God," etc. Ps. 22, 1.

And with it, behold the Lamb bearing also physical suffering — thirst that could not be quenched, the ridicule of the vilest, the wounded, torn, and bleeding flesh, the fever's inward, consuming heat. Hymn 209, 2. And do not fail to see there, as you behold the Lamb, that He is punished instead of you, instead of me. He is bearing our punishment.

2.

But, let us look again. Behold the Lamb! He does not only bear this real burden of sin, guilt, and punishment; behold, behold rightly, — He taketh it away!

A) As we look, we hear Him say, "It is finished!" Through all that this Lamb of God is bearing, suffering, and enduring, He is *accomplishing*. Accomplishing what? He is taking from the world, from us, the curse and punishment of sin. He has redeemed us. We could never have done it, because in our suffering, if we had undertaken to suffer for sin, — as some people have done and are doing, — we should have sinned more, just as those who impose upon themselves suffering because of their sin only sin so much the more. But what was perfectly impossible for us, that this Lamb of God is accomplishing, has accomplished. "Behold the Lamb of God which *taketh away the sin of the world.*" He suffered for our sin and suffered sufficiently. We need not suffer for it. He was cursed for our sin, and we are freed from the curse; He died for our sin, and we shall not die the death of a sinner. We were called upon to pay and could not pay, and He paid, paid perfectly, that which He did not owe, but which we owed.

All that the Old Testament types pictured when the blood of lambs and the blood of bulls and of goats flowed in streams upon the

altar of the Tabernacle and of the Temple, that was once and for all times, not pictured, but accomplished in reality when the Lamb of God shed His blood upon the cross. Heb. 9, 11. 12; 1 John 1, 7 b: "The blood of Jesus Christ," etc.

This is not a dream; this is not the word of a lying, false man; this is the true and faithful declaration of the infallible and true God Himself, who cannot lie. The Lamb of God has taken away your sin.

When your conscience accuses you, then look upon this Lamb, behold the Lamb, etc. When the devil tells you, you are his, tell Satan, Thou lyest, behold the Lamb "who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver," etc.

B) Is it possible that we look upon the Lamb of God, behold Him taking away from us our sin, with all its guilt, shame, and suffering, rejoice in God's favor and forgiveness, and yet not feel one spark of gratitude to Him?

No, it is not possible; for, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. 2 Cor. 5, 17. If we have looked aright at the Lamb of God, as truly repentant and as truly believing sinners, then the fruit of gratitude will also be forthcoming; for through this looking of a believer upon Jesus the Holy Spirit enters the heart. Gal. 3, 2—6; 5, 22. 23. They who look aright will be like that repentant woman who anointed Jesus in the Pharisee's house, Luke 7, 47, like Paul, to whom so much had been forgiven and who now said: Phil. 1, 21, and Phil. 3, 8.

Let us but inquire with Paul: Acts 9, 6. What should we in our station, at our time, and in our circumstances do to show our gratitude? Prov. 23, 26; John 4, 24. God wants the heart, and if your heart belongs to this Jesus, then you will also serve Him, glorify Him, and praise Him by your life, words, gifts, prayers, hymns.

How sweet is the Gospel! It comes from above
To speak of the wonders of heavenly love.
Deserving of wrath, here mercy I see;
For Jesus was punished — instead of me.

He saw my distresses, and my soul to win
He said He would take on Himself my sin;
And He stepped from His glory that He might be
Accused and punished — instead of me.

O Savior, all words are too weak to show
How much to Thy marvelous love I owe;
But my full heart sends up its thanks to Thee,
Who once wast punished — instead of me.

And to Thee I would yield a life of praise,
Speak well of Thy name and walk in Thy ways,
Whilst I long with desire Thy face to see,
Who once wast punished — instead of me.

S.

Ascension Day.

Mark 16, 14—20.

In the very first verse of this text we are told that Jesus upbraided His disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. If at that time, under those circumstances, there was occasion for such reproof, how much more is such upbraiding in place to-day, when hardness of heart, unbelief, and worldliness meet us on every hand!

The very fact that so little attention is paid to this great festival of the Church, commemorating the ascension of our Lord, shows that even professed Christians need correction. Indeed, if we examine ourselves, we shall not find in our own hearts the understanding of, and therefore not the interest in, the ascension of our Lord which ought to be found in every Christian's heart. If Jesus were with us to-day, as He was with the Eleven on that memorable day near Bethany, He would have occasion to upbraid us, too. Let us accept the reproof with repentance and humility, and let us pray Him that He may melt our hard hearts and fill us with faith, etc. The answer to such a prayer is found in the Gospel-lesson of Ascension Day, for in this Gospel lesson we have the story of Jesus' wonderful and blessed ascension.

The Wonderful Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven.

1. It is wonderful in its very nature; the occurrence itself is wonderful.

a) Some are troubled because the ascension of Christ is so wonderful. They are offended because they cannot understand the mysteries of God and of Christ. How foolish! They are just as foolish as the people who want water which is not wet, fire which does not burn, and food which needs not be eaten or masticated. God in His very nature is wonderful and incomprehensible. Rom. 11, 33. And His works are all wonderful. Who, when looking upon this wonderful creation of God, has not cried out: Ps. 104, 24? And as nature is wonderful, so much more are all things connected with God's work of redemption. Why should anybody be surprised that everything in Jesus' life is wonderful since He Himself is the Wonderful One? Is. 9, 6. "Without controversy great," etc. 1 Tim. 3, 16. Birth in a stable, childhood in Nazareth, teaching and miracles, baptism and temptation, — is not all this one miracle after the other? Why, then, should we be offended that His ascension into heaven is so wonderful?

b) St. Luke tells us that Jesus, after His resurrection, was seen of His disciples forty days and that then He led them out as far as to Bethany and there, while blessing them, was taken up into heaven. And just so we read here in our text, v. 19: "So, then, after the

Lord," etc. This meant, first of all, that Jesus' body actually began to rise from the earth, higher and higher, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. This was a truly wonderful, mysterious occurrence, the only one of its kind known or recorded. It is true that Elijah and Enoch were taken up into heaven without passing through the gates of death, but Jesus alone died, was resurrected, and ascended up into heaven visibly.

c) His ascension is wonderful also because of what took place and was not seen; for while He actually arose before the eyes of the apostles, higher and higher, and while they saw a cloud cover Him, so that they could no longer see Him, this is not all that happened. Jesus' body was not simply taken up higher and higher till it was up so high that the clouds covered Him and He could no longer be seen; no, Jesus, we are told, ascended into heaven. That is not some small space which is high up in the clouds or above the clouds, but it is the abode of the angels and of the saints made perfect in light, where He is beheld face to face by angels and by all who have inherited everlasting life. Eph. 1, 20—23; Job 19, 25—27; John 14, 2; Luke 23, 43. Heaven is an actual place, as the Bible teaches. It is frequently pictured to us. Phil. 3, 20. 21; Rev. 21, 1—27; Rom. 8, 18—23; Matt. 22, 30. And yet, though we know that our bodies will be there and our souls will be united with our bodies and we shall see Christ face to face and we shall be in the company of the holy spirits, the angels, and we shall be perfectly blessed, without sin, without ignorance, without any suffering, yet there are many mysteries connected with it that we do not understand. Nothing on this earth is just exactly like it. In hoping for heaven, we are not only longing for its happiness, but we are full of expectancy to understand it mysteries. How wonderful, therefore, is the ascension of Jesus into this wonderful and mysterious place, where God is enthroned in His glory and the angels and the spirits of just men behold Him in blessedness and commune with each other in perfect joy.

d) The ascension of Jesus is wonderful when we consider the words used here in our text: "Sat on the right hand of God." V. 19. This is, of course, a figure of speech; for God has no right hand such as we have. This figure is used in other parts of Scripture. Luke 22, 69. A vision of this wonderful occurrence was granted to the prophet Daniel. Dan. 7, 13. 14. This passage, together with Ps. 2; 110, 1. 2; Eph. 1, 20—23, shows that Luther's explanation is right: "What else can 'at My right hand' (Ps. 110, 1) mean than to enjoy equality with God? For He does not sit above Him, nor does He sit at His feet, neither higher nor lower, but at His right hand, on an equality with Him, so that heaven is even His throne and the earth His footstool. Just as He says in the last chapter of Matthew, v. 18: 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.'" (St. Louis Ed., III, 1910.)

In short, Jesus' return to His mode of existence before He humbled Himself. According to His human nature He ascended on high and led captivity captive.

O wonderful ascension of Jesus! Wonderful as everything is wonderful in Jesus. It is full of mystery, but God has taught it in His Word; we accept it, we believe it, and we join the angels in worshiping Him. (Hymn 237.)

2. But the ascension of our Lord is wonderful also because of the blessings which thereby accrue to us, His believers.

a) Is it not wonderful that just by His *going away,* by withdrawing His visible presence, the greatest of blessings should come to His disciples? The disciples thought that strange. They mourned. Jesus: "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart." John 16, 6. But He adds immediately: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: *It is expedient* for you that I go away," etc. He goes away that He may give us the greatest of blessings.

b) Let us keep in mind that all that Jesus wished to accomplish by His visible presence here on this earth *had been* accomplished. The Word had been made flesh and dwelt among us. Through His words and through His works He had given visible demonstrations of His Messiahship. As child and as man He perfectly obeyed the entire Law of God, in every detail and without the least blemish. Through His infinite suffering, through His cruel death, He, as spotless and at the same time as sinless High Priest, offered a perfect and sufficient sacrifice and a faultless atonement for all the sins of the whole world. Now His work was finished, He had grappled with death, fought that monster, entered the grave, and through His death and resurrection gained a complete victory over death and the grave. Through His repeated appearance during those forty days, before different groups of His disciples at different times, appearing even before over five hundred brethren at once, He demonstrated to them the fact that He had appeared and had brought life and immortality to light. All this was finished, done, completed. No purpose could be served by His remaining visibly here on this earth. He was now to distribute what He had gained, and all these treasures and all His spoils, to those for whom He had gained them.

c) By His ascension *heaven received Him,* our Champion and Substitute, *as Conqueror.* That makes His triumph complete. Ps. 68, 19; Col. 2, 15; Phil. 2, 9—11.

d) There now He intercedes for us. 1 John 2, 1; Heb. 7, 25.

e) From thence He now sends His Holy Spirit and rules all things for the glory and final redemption of His work. Acts 1, 8; Ps. 2, 6—12; Matt. 28, 18—20.

f) Thither He now draws us. Phil. 3, 20; Col. 3, 1; Phil. 1, 23; Rev. 22, 20. (Hymn 234.)

What *wonderful* blessings! S.

SUNDAY EVENING SERVICES.

FIVE MEN OF GOD.

Abraham.

Rom. 4, 16—25.

"By grace are ye saved through faith," Eph. 2, 8, so the Bible teaches. What is faith? The Bible itself gives us examples of faith, from which we can without fail learn what faith is. Such an example is that of Abraham's faith.

Abraham's Faith, an Example of True Faith.

1. In reference to its object. *2. In reference to its nature.*

1.

A) Faith must first of all have the right object. What was the object of Abraham's faith? "The promise of God." Text, vv. 20. 21. What was that promise? "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 12, 3. More specifically, this promise was given in the words: "In *thy Seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Gen. 22, 18; 26, 4. That this Seed of Abraham in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed was Christ, Paul tells us in the New Testament. "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. *He saith not: And to seeds, as of many; but as of one: And to thy Seed, which is Christ.*" Gal. 3, 16; Acts 3, 25. The object of Abraham's faith, in the final analysis, was God's promise of the Messiah, in whom Abraham and all who trusted in the Messiah's appearing, believed. *Because God had spoken,* Abraham believed.

B) God even now speaks to the world, *in and through His Word.* The Bible is God's revelation to man. In His Word, the Bible, God has made Himself known to us and has revealed how He is minded toward the sinner. The purpose of all that is written in the Bible is to bring the sinner to a knowledge of Jesus, the Savior. 2 Tim. 3, 15. The question, "What must I do to be saved?" has always been a paramount question, even if it has not always been put in these words. Man, however, by nature seeks to answer this question and to get his information concerning God from sources other than the Bible. But ancient and modern philosophers and ancient and modern religionists have in this way gotten nowhere. In their system the right object of faith was missing. They pinned their hope upon their own wisdom. It is not at all a question whether or not they were sincere, but whether they were right; the fact is that the object of their faith and hope was wrong. They very much resemble a man in the top story of a burning building who, upon seeing a life-net stretched in the street below, jumps in order to save his life, but, alas, finds that the life-net is rotten and is killed. Such a man was sincere in his assumption, but the object of his faith was all wrong.

The false religionists, who do not accept the Bible, do not and cannot have the true object of faith. After all, they trust in themselves, in their own righteousness, in their own work, in their own wisdom, and these must of necessity fail them. Luke 18, 9.

2.

A) It is, however, not sufficient that the right object of faith be known; the faith itself must be of the right kind. What was the nature of Abraham's faith? God gave Abraham the promise that in his Seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. The Messiah, according to the flesh, was to be descended from Abraham. But Abraham had no seed, no child. Gen. 15, 3. At that, he was old, and Sarah's womb was dead; yet there was God's repeated promise of the Seed. Gen. 15, 4. 5. This promise Abraham believed. V. 6. But Abraham's faith was put to a still greater test. After a son, Isaac, was born to Abraham, he was told to take this son, his *only* son, and sacrifice him. Gen. 22, 1. 2. What, then, should become of the promise of the Seed? But Abraham, in spite of it all, believed what the Lord said and believed that the Lord could and would make good His promise. That was faith.

Paul beautifully describes this faith in our text, saying: "Abraham against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform." Vv. 18—21. The nature of Abraham's faith was that Abraham *in spite of all that appeared to the contrary* firmly believed God's promise. That is the true nature of faith, absolute confidence and trust in God and in His Word. Abraham did not listen to his own reason, did not try to understand the mysterious ways of God, did not disbelieve because things seemed so different from what he might have expected, but fully trusted and "against hope believed in hope." Abraham was not weak in faith when it appeared to be a natural impossibility that he and Sarah should have a child; nor did he stagger at the promise of God through unbelief when God asked him to offer up his only son; but he was fully persuaded that what God had promised He was also able to perform. V. 23.

Such is the right kind of faith and, therefore, pleasing to God. We read: "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." V. 22. Gen. 15, 6. Through his faith in God's promise, his faith in the Messiah, Abraham laid hold on that righteousness which the

sinner must have in order to stand in the sight of a holy and righteous and just God.

B) But why have we this record of Abraham's faith? Our text announces: "Now, it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." Vv. 23—25. We have the same promise that God gave to Abraham, the promise of the Messiah. We, however, have an advantage over Abraham, inasmuch as we are living in the time of the New Testament, in the days of fulfilment. The Messiah has come. Our text says: "Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." V. 25. Christ's death and resurrection are facts. Jesus died for our sins. The Bible teaches the doctrine of the vicarious atonement. Christ was made a curse for us and thus has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, from eternal damnation. Gal. 3, 13. Said an unbelieving professor to his students: "Paul teaches the vicarious atonement." "Professor," said a student, "did I understand you correctly?" "Yes," answered the professor, "I did not say that I believe it, but I did say that Paul teaches the doctrine of the vicarious atonement." Yes, Paul teaches it; Christ teaches it; the Old and New Testaments teach it. Jesus was raised for our justification. When God raised Jesus, He thereby declared to the whole world that He had accepted the work which Christ did for us; in other words, that now we are redeemed. Christ's resurrection is God's justification of the world of sinners. 1 Cor. 15, 1—4. 13—22.

But it is not enough to know all this. The unbelieving professor also knew it, but that mere knowledge did not save him. If Christ's righteousness is to be imputed to us, we must believe the good news of salvation, even as Abraham did. Our reason may not, in fact it does not, understand God's wonderful way of salvation. Our sinful reason takes offense at the cross of Christ. Our own conscience condemns us, and our many sins would make us despair of any divine forgiveness. But over against all this stands God's sure declaration: "Christ was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." V. 25. "It is of faith that it might be by grace." V. 16. That is God's way of salvation. It is the only way, it is the sure way.

J. H. C. Fritz.

Joseph.

Gen. 50, 20.

God has given to believers exceedingly great and precious promises, but we are so slow to believe them. Especially when trials and persecutions are hard upon us, we are easily discouraged. Why? Because many of God's good purposes are as yet hidden from our

eyes. We are often very much like doubting Thomas, who said: "Except I shall see . . ., I will not believe." John 20, 25. As a result, we make ourselves and others unhappy. A study of the lives of great men of God will help us to grow stronger in faith. A careful study of the life of Joseph, for instance, reveals to us the wonderful ways of God and the fulfilment of His great and glorious purposes. But poor Joseph could not foresee all this from the beginning; yet he trusted in the Lord. So we also should do. Let us study the life of Joseph. It is a mighty inspiration to us. It ought to make us more humble, but at the same time stronger and happier in faith.

The Life of Joseph, a True Type of the Life of the Christian in this World.

1. *Like Joseph the Christian must suffer enmity and persecution.*
2. *Like Joseph the Christian trusts in the Lord, knowing that God maketh all things work together for good to them that love Him.*

1.

A) "As for you, ye thought evil against me." So, our text tells us, Joseph said to his brothers. The evil which Joseph had to suffer was directed against his godliness. Joseph was a God-fearing person. Like Joseph the Christian lives a godly life, irrespective of the consequences. We must, of course, always first emphasize the fact that the sinner is saved, not by his works, but alone by grace. This Scripture plainly teaches. Rom. 3, 28; 4, 16; Eph. 2, 8. 9. Only he is a Christian who looks solely to Jesus for his salvation, and only such a person can then also lead a truly Christian life in this world. And the necessity of leading such a Christian life or of doing good works as a fruit of faith must also be emphasized; for the Scriptures also clearly teach that a Christian must live as a Christian and can no longer live and delight in sin. Col. 3, 1—3; Rom. 6, 1—6; Phil. 3, 20; Eph. 2, 10; Matt. 5, 13—16. Joseph's life, first of all, is an example of a godly life, such as every one who calls himself a Christian should live in this evil world. Too many of those who call themselves Christians are careless in this respect. When they are among the people of this world, it is often difficult to find the line of demarcation between them and the world. This ought not so to be. The following story is told of two people who had just been married: The husband one day found his wife crying and sobbing. Upon inquiry she said to him, "Oh, if you were only a Christian!" He replied, "Are you a Christian?" She said, "Most certainly I am." "Listen," said he, "let me put a few questions to you. Do you like to dance?" "Yes," said she. "So do I," answered her husband. "Do you like to go to the theater?" "Why, of course," was her answer. "So do I," replied her husband. After he put a few more questions of a similar nature to her, he said, "Now, my dear, if you will tell me what the difference

is between your life and my life, I shall consider becoming a Christian." — Let us be careful not to give offense by an ungodly life and to misrepresent Christianity to the world and at the same time, as David did at one time, 2 Sam. 12, 14, cause the enemies of God to blaspheme.

B) If, however, we live a godly, a Christian, life in this world, we, like Joseph, must suffer enmity and persecution. This is in the very nature of the case. When Joseph reported to his father the evil deeds of his brothers, they hated him for it. Gen. 37, 2. And when they saw that Joseph, on account of his godliness, would perhaps be preferred to them, they entertained thoughts of murder against him. V. 20. Finally they compromised and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver; these took him to Egypt, where he was bought as a slave by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. In Egypt, Joseph was a stranger among strangers. He did not, however, as many do when they have gone to a strange country, forsake the God of his fathers. He continued to serve his God. "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person and well favored." Gen. 39, 2—6.

It was in the house of Potiphar that Joseph's integrity and godliness was put to a severe test. Joseph had a very attractive appearance. Potiphar's wife cast her eyes upon him and sought to seduce him to commit fornication with her. The great King David fell under less trying circumstances. Many a young man would not have withstood the enchantments of Potiphar's wife, but Joseph said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" V. 9. Joseph not only refused to yield to the allurements of a wicked woman, but he also avoided to be in her very presence, for he knew that it was dangerous to play with fire. And when, by her own trickery, Potiphar's wife thought that she had trapped Joseph and could force him to sin with her, he tore himself away and fled, leaving his garment, by which she had grasped him, in her hand. This very garment the woman used as evidence against Joseph, accusing him unto her husband of the very sin of which she was guilty, but Joseph innocent. As a result, Potiphar had Joseph put into prison, but Joseph re-

mained faithful to the Lord. "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Gen. 39, 21. — We have many examples in the Scripture of the hatred of the Lord's enemies against His people — Daniel, three men in the fiery furnace, Israel in Egypt, Paul, and other apostles. Says Jesus: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" Luke 6, 26. Says Paul: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3, 12; John 15, 20; 17, 14. This lesson, that the Christian must in this evil world experience the hatred and the persecution of the world, we all yet need to learn better. The hatred of the world against us ought not to surprise nor discourage us. We ought rather to expect it. We ought to be surprised when it is not so. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." 1 Pet. 4, 12—14. These trials of our faith are hard to endure, Heb. 12, 11, but God Himself will strengthen us. 1 Cor. 10, 13.

2.

A) Joseph, in spite of all the vicissitudes and trials in his life, continued to trust in the Lord, knowing that God, whom he loved and served, would not forget him and would not fail to make good His own promises.

We must remember, however, that Joseph was not a superman, but just a plain human being as the rest of us are. We must also not forget that Joseph underwent most of his trials while still quite young, and youth often does not take life as seriously as it ought. We must furthermore not forget that Joseph's own reason dictated to him another policy than that which he pursued: Why should I not join my wicked brothers and enjoy life with them? Why should I incur their hatred on account of my piety? Why should I let myself be sold into slavery? Why should not I also enjoy the lust of the flesh? Why should I let myself be cast into prison when I am entirely innocent? Where, after all, is my God? Is He really making good His promises? Is He showing me His protection and divine favor? Why did He not keep me out of prison? Why at all did He let me be torn away from my home and taken to Egypt? Such and similar thoughts no doubt ran through Joseph's mind, but Joseph conferred not with flesh and blood. Gal. 1, 16. He did not listen to his own reason nor to the whisperings of the Evil One, but put his trust entirely in God and in His promises. What a wonderful example

Joseph has given us, especially the young of our day! The wicked brothers of Joseph are still about in this world and are filled with hatred against all young men and women who will not join them in their sinful doings. Potiphar's wife is also still about; in fact, the sex appeal is much more pronounced in our day than it ever has been before during our lifetime and is trying by force to take the youth of our day captive in its snares. Oh, that the words of Joseph might be kept in mind: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"!

B) And how did Joseph fare? You say: He did not seem to fare very well; he was sold as a slave, he was cast into prison and had all the heartaches which the facing of death and his being torn away from home and the shame of imprisonment brought with it. But, after all, this is only a part of the story. Said Joseph to his brothers: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." So God did. God was ever with Joseph, and the very evil ways of man, God used to serve His own good purposes. Joseph finally rose to great honors in Egypt, and through him many people were blessed. "God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

In Egypt, Joseph was next to the king himself. Listen. We read: "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art; thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand and put it upon Joseph's hand and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." Gen. 41, 39—44. Wonderful! Through Joseph's wisdom, which, of course, God had given him, Joseph provided food for the years of famine. His own brothers at that time had to come and buy food of him, bow before him, acknowledge him as their superior. This was the means of finally bringing Joseph's father to Egypt and reuniting father and son. It was thus that the children of Israel were brought to Egypt and that subsequently God in their behalf visited terrible plagues upon the Egyptians and gave the Israelites a glorious escape through the Red Sea, returning them again to Canaan, and, through Moses, keeping the promise of the Messiah before them. All this was closely linked up with the life of this one man Joseph. Thus God was with Joseph, and Joseph fared well. Joseph was not disappointed because he put his trust in the Lord.

But let us remember that Joseph was human, as we are, and could not foresee all the glory that was awaiting him and the wonderful purposes which God had in view; his only hope and trust could be that God would make all things work together for good to them that love Him. This is the great lesson which we are to learn from Joseph's life. The ways of God are hidden from us, but we have God's promises and the assurance that, though the wicked world thinks evil against us, yet God means it unto our good, as our text says. May we be encouraged to resist all temptations, to lead a godly life, to cheer up under the hardest and most depressing trials, to continue faithfully to serve our Lord and ever put our trust in Him, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love Him. Rom. 8, 28. God, who has so dearly loved us that He gave His own Son to redeem us from sin, death, and hell, will not forsake us in the trials of this life, for God surely desires our good and our eternal salvation. Father and mother and relatives and friends may forsake us, but God never will. With Paul, we can confidently exclaim: "What shall we, then, say to these things?" etc. Rom. 8, 31—39.

J. H. C. Fritz.

Moses.

Ex. 3, 10—12a.

When God has some great work that He wishes to do through men, He prepares great leaders. Such were Moses, David, Isaiah, and Paul in Biblical times, Luther in the days of the Reformation, Muhlenberg and Walther in the history of our Lutheran Church in this country. There are innumerable men who in a minor capacity have been leaders chosen by God, but such great leaders as those mentioned are few. They usually rise from obscurity to great prominence. They are divinely called and specially trained for their work. Such great leaders are extraordinary gifts of God. By studying the lives of such men we may learn many a lesson which we can apply to ourselves.

The Call of Moses, the Call of God to Leadership.

1. *God prepared Moses for such leadership.*
2. *God by His own might and grace wrought great things through Moses.*

1.

A) God wonderfully protected Moses at his birth. To rid himself of the children of Israel, Pharaoh commanded that the midwives should kill all the male children at birth, Ex. 1, 15. 16; but God frustrated that. Vv. 17—21. Thereupon "Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." V. 22. God, however,

desired to save the life of one particular Hebrew child. Ex. 2, 1—4. God can and does save the lives of whomsoever He will, and the schemes of men cannot frustrate His purpose. Our life is in the hands of God. Moses was born of humble parents. Some that are born in king's palaces and in the homes of the rich and at their birth attract much attention, later in life do not turn out well, and their names are soon forgotten, while many a child born in obscurity later rises to distinction and to high honors and to the accomplishment of great things. We should never despise a man because of his humble birth and parentage. Jesus Himself was born of a humble Jewish maiden, in a stable.

B) God had even the daughter of Pharaoh to take Moses to her court and train him in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians. Ex. 2, 1—10; Acts 7, 22. Pharaoh's daughter named the child Moses, because, she said, "I drew him out of the water." Such men as Paul and Luther were also specially trained in their early days for the work which they were to do later in life. The Church does not despise learning and wisdom, even not that which this world can offer. The Church has always been the champion of education. Some of the great institutions of learning in this country were established by the Church. It is in accordance with God's will that we have an educated ministry. The better equipped a minister of the Gospel is with all manner of sound learning, the better he can serve the Lord in the Church. We also need educated laymen. Parents should be encouraged to give their children a good education, so that they may better serve the Lord in His kingdom. (See Luther's article *Von den Schulen* in his *Unterricht der Visitatoren an die Pfarrherren,* St. L., X, 1629; and his sermon *Dass man Kinder zur Schule halten soll,* St. L., X, 416; also *An die Ratsherren aller Staedte Deutschlands, dass sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen,* St. L., V, 458.)

C) If Moses should become the leader of God's people, he had to separate himself from the Egyptian court and break away from Egyptian influence. God, therefore, had him to make a great decision. At this time Moses was forty years old. We read: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Heb. 11, 24—27. From a mere worldly point of view great things were in store for Moses in Egypt — wealth, social standing, and, as some think, even the throne of Egypt itself. But Moses chose to cast his lot with God's despised people. Christ

offered him greater riches than Egypt could. Moses turned his back on all that this world offered him and looked to the eternal reward of God's children. God would indeed make Moses a "ruler and deliverer" of His people. Acts 7, 35. In the lives of such great men as Paul, Augustine, Luther, Walther, and others, similarly a time of decision came when they underwent a change of mind and heart and turned away from former surroundings and things and launched out upon a new course of life, the former "advantages" and coming obstacles and difficulties notwithstanding.

2.

A) Moses, after all, was by nature a sinful man, and his life in the service of God was not blameless. When, for instance, his second son was born, he failed to have him circumcised at once, because his wife Zipporah regarded circumcision as a barbarous rite. God brought Moses nigh unto death because of his unfaithfulness, but let him recover when Zipporah herself had performed the rite of circumcision. Ex. 4, 24—26. And because Moses, with others, trespassed against the Lord at the water of Meribah-Kadesh, he was not allowed to enter the land of promise, but was permitted only to view it at a distance. Deut. 32, 48—52; Num. 20, 12. 13. Even the great men of God are not without their failings; utter perfection is not reached in this world, and the closer one gets to such men, the more he notices how human they are. That to us, on the one hand, is a comfort, 1 John 1, 7, but also, on the other, a warning against sin and an admonition to strive for holiness, for the recorded sins of God's children are never made attractive. Phil. 3, 12; Rom. 7, 24. 25.

B) Not only was Moses' life not blameless, but he also had a defective speech. This was a great handicap to him; but God, in spite of Moses' remonstrance, used him to perform great things. V. 10. God gave Aaron, the brother of Moses, to him as his spokesman. Ex. 4, 10—16. After all, Moses was just to be an instrument in the hands of God, through which God Himself, by His might and grace, would work his wonders. Such men as Moses, Paul, Luther, and many others, were in themselves insufficient for their great work in the Church of God; God Himself was their sufficiency. 2 Cor. 12, 9. Such men also gave the glory to God. Vv. 11. 12. *Soli Deo gloria!* Deut. 8, 10—20.

Moses freed his people from the bondage of Egypt. Before Pharaoh, Moses performed miracles. On behalf of His people, God visited ten plagues upon the Egyptians. Ex. 5—13. Moses stretched forth his rod over the Red Sea and the children of Israel passed through it, while the hosts of Pharaoh were drowned. Ex. 14, 15 f. On Mount Sinai, God gave His Law to Moses, and through him published it to the children of Israel and to the world at large.

During the forty years of the journey in the wilderness, Moses'

leadership was taxed to the utmost. The children of Israel were not easily led. As they had in the beginning refused to accept Moses as their leader, Ex. 6, 9, they afterwards even murmured against him; they were rebellious people. (The chapters of the wilderness journey should be carefully studied. Ex. 14 ff.)

During the forty years in the wilderness, Moses did his principal literary work — kept a record of the encampments, Num. 33; made a note of important events; committed the many statutes of God to writing, Deut. 31, 24; preserved a copy of his farewell addresses, Deut. 29 and 30; also wrote religious poetry, Ex. 15, 1—8; Ps. 90; Deut. 32 and 33; in fact, the first five books in the Bible were written by Moses, for which fact we have the authority of the New Testament. Luke 16, 31.

C) Especially did God through Moses bring the children of Israel to a knowledge of the Messiah and keep them in the worship of the true God. That was the final purpose of Moses' mission and leadership. God spoke to Moses of "My people." V. 10. He spoke of the great Prophet whom God would send to His people. Deut. 18, 15; Acts 3, 22. 23. By the brazen serpent Moses directed the people to Christ, their Savior. Num. 21, 9; John 3, 14. 17. Says Jesus: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me." John 5, 46; 1, 45. Whatever a servant of Christ may do, all must serve the final purpose of his calling; to preach Christ Crucified, salvation by grace, that men everywhere might be saved and learn to worship God aright and finally glorify Him with the saints in heaven. May God give us many faithful spiritual leaders, faithful preachers and pastors, especially in these trying times and days of apostasy, in which our Lutheran Church, to which God has given and unto which God has preserved His unadulterated truth, has not only great opportunities, but also great responsibilities. And although they themselves are insufficient for their great work, v. 12, God will be with them, even as He was with Moses, v. 12 a, and will accomplish great things through them, even the salvation of many souls through the preaching of the Gospel. J. H. C. Fritz.

David.

2 Chron. 1, 8a.

The devil ever seeks to frustrate man's salvation. When he first tempts us to sin, he makes sin appear to us to be very trivial, with no serious consequences. After the devil has led us into sin, he makes sin appear so tremendously big and disastrous that it will mean our eternal ruin. In both cases the devil is a liar: sin is never a trivial matter, for it is an offense against God; on the other hand, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Rom. 5, 20. The wonder-

ful grace of God can be seen in the lives of the great men of God spoken of in the Bible. Paul, for instance, was a blasphemer and a persecutor, but he says: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to live everlasting." 1 Tim. 1, 14—16. Paul was exceedingly sinful before his conversion. But what if the Christian fall after he has been converted? The life of David gives us the answer.

The Life of David Exemplifies the Great Mercy and the Grace of God.

1. As seen in David's youth. 2. As seen in David's reign. 3. As seen in David's repentance.

1.

A) It seems that, like Timothy, 2 Tim. 1, 5, David had a godly mother. Ps. 86, 16; 116, 16. To be born of Christian parents does not make one a Christian, but it at once puts one under the influence of those who, through the means of grace, can consecrate one to God. To be born of Christian parents is something for which we ought to thank God's mercy.

B) God gave to David a beautiful bodily appearance. 1 Sam. 16, 12. Since sin has deprived man also of much of the beauty which God had given to his body, a beautiful face and a beautiful form are things which now we do not deserve. They, now that sin is in the world, also have their peculiar dangers. Joseph, we are told, because of his goodly form became very attractive to Potiphar's wife. We should, however, seek to preserve well that body and life which God has given us, and the best assurance for good health and a pleasing countenance is to live in accordance with God's will; for a life of sin not only ruins man's soul, but also his body.

C) God had given to David special gifts and had also in this respect showed him great mercy. David was a musician, who skilfully played the harp. 1 Sam. 16, 14—18. He was a poet, of which his many psalms are evidence; perhaps he also composed the music to these, which was played by the Temple orchestra. It is God that endows man with special talents, such as the gift of music, poetry, speech, art, keen judgment, invention. We should appreciate such gifts and cultivate them and use them not only for our own benefit, but also, and especially, for the benefit of others.

D) God early had David anointed king. 1 Sam. 16, 1—13. David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse. V. 11. God, however, did not

choose David on account of his beautiful bodily appearance or his accomplishments, although these were precious gifts of God, but because David loved the Lord. V. 7. David was a man after God's own heart. Acts 13, 22. Under Samuel, David had been trained for his future life's work. There are three classes of people who exert a tremendous influence for good in this world — Christian parents, Christian teachers, and Christian pastors. It is special grace when God singles out a young man, as David was, trains him, and then puts him in a high and responsible position. Not many are thus favored. When they are, they must be careful to keep humble and not let the wine of conceit go to their head. Nor should we despise a man simply because he is young and inexperienced. "Let no man despise thy youth," said Paul to Timothy.

As we review the younger days of David, we learn the truth of the words of our text, Solomon saying unto God: "Thou hast showed great mercy unto David, my father."

2.

A) Upon the death of Saul, David, about thirty years old, was elected by the tribe of Judah as its king. After the death of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, who had reigned over the tribes which warred against David, David was elected king of all Israel. — We should faithfully perform the duties which God has assigned to us and patiently wait until God, if He so chooses, puts us into a higher and more responsible position. Some people grow impatient with their work and station in life and think that their natural gifts and their education and their experience entitle them to a more responsible and more influential position. But let us remember that God knows our address and knows where to find us; in the mean time we should be faithful in that place to which God has called us and in that work which God has given us to do.

B) God helped David to conquer his enemies and to establish his throne at Jerusalem. The Philistines were so completely conquered that for centuries they did not trouble Israel. After David had established political peace, he turned his attention to the religious affairs of his people — he brought the Ark to Jerusalem, where he had built a tabernacle for it, 2 Chron. 1, 4; he organized the worship on a magnificent scale, 1 Chron. 15 and 16; he planned a splendid temple to the Lord, 1 Chron. 22, 6 ff.

David reigned forty and one-half years and was in his seventy-first year when he died. The Lord made him prosperous. David kept his people from idolatrous contamination. David understood that it was his business in this world to build the kingdom of God and to use *to this end* all the material prosperity and the influence which God had given him. We Christians to-day ought better to understand and realize *why we are here*. Jesus did not take His

disciples with Him when He ascended to heaven, because He would have them, as He said, to be witnesses unto Him for the salvation of others. Acts 1, 8; John 17, 15—21. We are living in a prosperous country. We are sharing the prosperity of our country. Our Church is well equipped to do the Lord's work. But why the many deficits in our treasuries? Why such slow progress in our mission-work? God has bestowed upon us, even as upon David, His abundant mercy. Let us not waste it. Let us not by unfaithfulness and unthankfulness call down God's curse upon us.

3.

A) During the Ammonite war, David, the great and glorious king, committed two great sins, adultery and murder. 2 Sam. 11. David was a man of like passions as we are. His high position did not make him immune against temptation; on the contrary, the devil took more pains to lead him astray. Poor David fell to the temptation of lust. It was during his leisure moments, while one evening he was walking on the roof of his palace, that he saw beautiful Bathsheba washing herself. Many a person has during his leisure moments, when his thoughts were not centered upon his regular work, been tempted to think and to do things which he ought not. Yet we must also have our leisure moments. David had fallen as soon as he had permitted the evil lust to take hold of his heart; for the Savior says: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matt. 5, 28. But David permitted his evil lust to lead him further astray, even to the extent of gross adultery and murder. David's evil deeds were committed deliberately; that added to his guilt. Oh, how a mighty man can fall! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10, 12.

B) But the Lord, as our text says, showed great mercy to David. 2 Sam. 12. The approach of Nathan, the Lord's prophet, showed great wisdom and tact. David was made to condemn himself. After David was cornered in his sin, he did not deny it, nor did he offer any excuse, as is usually the case, Gen. 3, 12. 13, but admitted his guilt and took all the blame for it. 1 Sam. 12, 13. David made a good confession. Ps. 51. He understood the real nature of sin, disobedience against God. 2 Sam. 12, 13; Ps. 51, 4. David was truly penitent. Ps. 51, 6—12. The Lord forgave David. 2 Sam. 12, 13.

David's terrible sins are not recorded in order that we should make light of such sins. But, on the one hand, they are to warn us against the danger of yielding to temptation and, on the other hand, when we have sinned, to assure us of God's grace in order that we may not despair, which would be the devil's delight. There is no sin so great and terrible that it cannot be forgiven. As the Lord forgave

David, the woman taken in the very act of adultery, Peter, and others, so He will also forgive sinners to-day. Rom. 5, 20; 1 John 1, 7.

From David, Christ is descended according to the flesh. Christ was David's Son, but also David's Lord, the God-man, our Savior. It was through faith in the Messiah that David received forgiveness of sin and was assured of his salvation. It is only by trusting in this same Savior that we have forgiveness and the assurance of everlasting life. And though, like Paul and David and others, we must consider ourselves chief among the sinners, yet, like unto them, we can know and confidently believe that God is gracious to us. That, however, ought to encourage us to be faithful to God and to pray that He may strengthen us in our battles against sin, giving us strength to resist and power to serve Him in the beauty of holiness.

J. H. C. Fritz.

Jeremiah.

Jer. 6, 16.

The series of evening sermons on five great men of the Old Testament may find a fitting close in a sermon on the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a young man when God called him and put His words into his mouth and set him "over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Jer. 1, 4—10. Jeremiah was told that his work would meet with opposition. V. 8. The very men of Anathoth, the people of his own home district, were the first to oppose him; they even threatened to kill him if he would not cease his preaching. Jer. 11, 18—23. This opposition became general. King Jehoiakim took the very roll on which Jeremiah had the scribe Baruch write the prophecies of the last twenty years and cut it in pieces and flung it into the fire. Jer. 36, 1—26. Jeremiah, by divine direction, at once prepared a new roll and made some additions. Vv. 27—32. Jeremiah was put into stocks, 20, 1—3; he was thrown into prison, 37, 1—5; and later was cast into a dungeon to die, 38, 1—6. But Jeremiah could not be killed, because God protected the life of His prophet, whom he had called to deliver a message to a people who had forsaken their God and to a world far gone wrong. Chap. 16, 1—21. Though a lone man, misunderstood, hated, persecuted, Jeremiah threw himself wholly upon his God.

Spiritual conditions in our days are similar to those in the days of Jeremiah. Many to-day have forsaken the Lord. Jeremiah's message is much needed to-day. What was his message? He said: "Thus saith the Lord: Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Jeremiah's message: —

"Ask for the Old Paths and Walk Therein."

Let us learn —

1. *What are the old paths;*
2. *Why we should ask for them and walk therein.*

1.

A) Progress is the watchword of our time, and indeed such things as the automobile, the aeroplane, the radio, and many, many other things are evidence that we are living in a progressive age. The world is continually undergoing a change — new ideas, new methods, new teachings. Much that is old is cast on the rubbish heap. A man loves new things. That has always been so. The Athenians "spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Acts 17, 21. The newer the thing that is featured in big headlines in the daily press, the more eager the people are to read it. New clothes, new styles, a new home, new surroundings, new acquaintances and friends: all these have something that is fascinating. The old automobile is not always replaced because it will not run any longer, but because it must make place for the newer model. We are living in a restless, as well as in a restive, age.

B) There are those who say that, since so many things have changed in this world, religion also must undergo a change. Creeds of four hundred and a thousand years ago, we are told, will not fit in with our age. The enlightened man of to-day, it is said, cannot be expected to believe the old truths of the Bible which have always been taught by the Christian Church. People of our age, we are told, also desire to have more liberty, and especially can we not expect to deprive our young people of such greater liberty if we at all expect to keep them with the Church.

To ask people to walk in the old paths is considered by many the height of folly. But that is exactly Jeremiah's message. The children of Israel had departed from the Word of the Lord. The Lord had said: "The Word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." It was then that God sent Jeremiah to them, saying, "Stand ye in the ways and see." In other words, God reminded them that there are many ways they might go, but all these ways do not lead to God. Therefore He bade them, "Ask for the old paths and walk therein." These old paths are the paths which God in His Word bids us go, the paths of the Gospel of Christ, of doctrinal purity, of peace, of righteousness, paths that are good, that lead to God and heaven; not the paths of sin, of spiritual indifferentism, of unrighteousness, of false doctrine, of sinful pleasures, of covetousness, of mammon, of misery and hell. In other words, God's message to us, through Jeremiah, is that we should abide by the old Word of God. Last year we celebrated the four-hundredth anniversary of Luther's Small Catechism. There is no reason why we should not

continue to teach and believe its doctrines. This year we are celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. There is no reason why our Lutheran Church should discard that and make for itself a new confession. Nor has the will of God in reference to what we are to do and not to do changed. If we would know what is sin and what God would have us to do, we must even to-day turn to the Bible for an answer.

2.

We are told to ask for and walk in the old paths, because they are "the good way" and because, walking in this good old way, we "shall find rest for our souls."

A) Age makes a thing neither good nor bad. We should not accept a thing because it is new nor discard it because it is old. In things immaterial and unessential we often find that people are sticklers for old things. Hundred and one reasons will often not persuade them to make a change when the change ought to be made. The reason why God asks us to ask for and walk in the old paths of the Gospel, of His Word, is not simply because these are old, but because they lead us the right way. In spite of all changes, progress, advancement, enlightenment, etc., in the world, man is by nature essentially the same to-day that he ever was. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3, 6. Therefore the sinner to-day is also under the condemnation of God. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23. Man, even to-day, needs a Savior, and this Savior is He of whom the Gospel tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4, 12. The only way in which the sinner even to-day can be saved is that he repent of his sins and by faith accept forgiveness in Christ. Any other religious way leads not to heaven, but to hell. Rest, real rest, for the souls can only be found in Christ. Of course the devil tries to deceive us. He comes to us as he came to Christ; he tries to make us doubt that we are God's children, he misquotes Scripture, he shows us the world in all its glory and splendor and says: "All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Matt. 4, 1 ff. Be not foolish enough to let yourself be deceived.

B) And faith, if it be saving faith, must also to-day produce the fruit of good works. There is but one definition of sin: "Sin is the transgression of the Law." 1 John 3, 4. The child of God, or the Christian, cannot live in sin. 1 John 3, 5—11. Ministers have no right to make new laws which either fall short of, or go beyond, the commandments of God.

Of course, the hatred of the world has also not changed. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." 1 John 3, 13. But such hatred the Christian must endure; it cannot harm him. It will be but a trial of his faith.

But the Christian religion has always made good in every way. Its Gospel has not only always given men rest for their souls, but has also blessed their entire life and made them a blessed people in this world. Even unbelievers must acknowledge this if they are honest. Those who walk in the ways of the Lord are not the people who are the world's thieves and murderers and fornicators, and the like, not the people for whom we must build and maintain our large police force and our armies and build our jails and penitentiaries.

Surely there is reason sufficient why we Christians should cling to the old Bible and the old Gospel and why we should not be ashamed of our Lutheran Church and its doctrines. We need the old truth, and the world around us needs it. Therefore

"Let us go the old paths
Where the saints have trod
Till our journey leads us
Where the hosts adore
Christ, our great Redeemer,
Blessed forevermore."

J. H. C. Fritz.

FIVE GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.

The Inspiration of Scripture.

2 Tim. 3, 14—16.

(*Note.* — Read at altar: 2 Tim. 3, 10—4, 5.)

The letter from which our text is taken was written by St. Paul to a young preacher in Ephesus in Asia Minor.

Ephesus was famous in literature, in art, in culture, so much so that she was called "the Light of Asia." Her principal glory, however, was the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. The image worshiped therein, said to have fallen from heaven, was a figure of a very ugly woman. All Ephesus, aye, all Asia, worshiped at her shrine. Corrupt practises of the vilest sort, especially sins against the Sixth Commandment, were part and parcel of this heathen worship. — Such was the horrible religion the preacher in Ephesus had to oppose.

In Ephesus various heathen philosophic systems were in vogue. Religious deceivers were plentiful. Gross spiritual darkness covered "the Light of Asia."

In Ephesus that indomitable hero of faith St. Paul had labored for several years, fighting the powers of darkness by presenting the

light of the Gospel to "the Light of Asia," and had founded a large Christian congregation.

Now, however, Timothy, a constant associate of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys, was in charge of the congregation. Timothy was a faithful preacher of the Gospel, but he was of a timid, shrinking nature. He needed support. He had to be told "not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord"; he needed instruction how to meet his difficulties.

And such is the tenor of the letter St. Paul, the aged, in bonds at Rome, wrote to supply Timothy with what he needed. He lauds him for his unfeigned faith, he consoles him with the truth that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." In view of the perilous times in which "evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," in view of the heathenish philosophic systems, the idol-worship, and the soul-destroying errors prevalent in Ephesus, there was but one thing to do, *"Continue thou in the things thou hast learned"; abide by the Holy Scriptures.* The inspired Word of God is the all-sufficient, trusty shield and weapon against all spiritual enemies. Hence the admonition: *"Abide by the Holy Scriptures."*

Friends, we live in Ephesus. We live in a time that St. Paul described thus: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap unto themselves teachers after their own lusts and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside unto fables." The heathen philosophies, the seductive heresies, the religious errorists, of ancient times are with us today, only clothed in modern phrases.

What are we to do? Become timid, be ashamed of the old Gospel, make concessions to the so-called modern theology? Are we to be entrapped by such a hollow phrase as: "Preach a modern Gospel to a modern world"? God forbid; as we prize our soul's salvation, — no!

Abide by the Holy Scriptures.

Why?

1. Because they are given by inspiration of God;

2. Because they alone are able to make wise unto salvation.

1.

"Continue thou in the things thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Timothy, the times are perilous, endangering your own soul and that of the members of your congregation; but, thanks to God, there is a remedy. From a child, Timothy, you have been taught the Holy Scriptures by your God-fearing mother Eunice and by your faithful grandmother Lois. From them you have learned to know your Savior and to love Him. Later, to young manhood grown, you became my

associate in the work for the Lord Jesus. By me you have been all the more grounded in the Scriptures. The Word of God you heard of me you received "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God." Continue in this faithful Word; for "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

This truth, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"* must stand out in all its force in the heart and mind of the preacher Timothy. Timothy knew this truth, believed it, practised it, preached it; but, growing timid in the heat of the battle, he must learn it anew from his aged teacher, the inspired apostle. Being assured of it anew, he would be filled with new vim, vigor, zeal, to preach it all the more boldly. Learning it anew, the trying situation in the godless city of Ephesus (false doctrines, vices, etc.), threatening to swamp the faith of the faithful, would not be so awe-inspiring; he would boldly follow the charge of St. Paul to throw off his timidity and "preach the Word, be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching."

Now, what was Timothy assured of anew? *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."* The Bible, the Scriptures, from cover to cover, all, is *God's Word.* God is holy; this Book, coming from the holy God, is a holy book; the Scriptures are *holy scriptures."* They are given *"by inspiration* of God." Inspire means to "breathe into"; "all Scripture is God-breathed." Every thought, every sentence, every word, is "God-breathed," inspired. There is not a mixture of man's word and God's word — all Scripture is the Word of God. What a marvelous book — a God-breathed book!

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Bible is God's revelation to man. God cannot err. His Word is true, is *infallible.*

Hence, Timothy, why be timid in preaching this Book? It's the only infallible book in the world. When you speak the Word, you speak the truth, God's truth; when you speak the Word, God speaks. You are but His mouthpiece. So, then, boldly proclaim the Word and preface it with a "So saith the Lord!" "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort." "Continue thou" — over against all errorists and gainsayers — "in the things thou hast learned," the Holy Scriptures.

Timothy, we may rest assured, was heartened by such words and lifted up his voice like a trumpet against all godlessness, crying: "So saith the Lord!"

We live in Ephesus to-day. We are surrounded by religious impostors and deceivers; we live in an age in which the "great multitudes will not endure sound doctrine, but turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside unto fables." "The Light of Asia," man's wisdom, is the light in which they walk. But "if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So it is well that we, too, from time to time learn anew the divine character of the Bible, as we do to-day, that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.* We know that God did not drop these books down from heaven as a fixed quantity; nor did He write the words with His own finger, as He did the Ten Commandments given to Moses at Mount Sinai. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," says St. Peter (2 Pet. 1, 21). In some peculiar way the inspired penmen were moved and impelled to write. Thoughts came to them, glorious, grand thoughts of God for the salvation of man; the impulse to write these divine thoughts came. They themselves were filled with wonderment at the things of God they had written. They studied and restudied their own writings and those of the holy men before their time for a deeper knowledge of the things "the Spirit of Christ," the Holy Spirit, *"which was in them* did signify when He *testified* beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. 1, 10.) This, briefly, is what is meant by this wonderful mysterious act of God — inspiration.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration." The very words are inspired. Says Paul: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Sentiments such as these: "The thoughts in the Bible are God's thoughts; the words are man's words," are utterly false. Thoughts depend upon words; if the words are not God-breathed, the thoughts cannot be.

All Scripture, the whole Bible, is inspired, also in its historical and astronomical data, in its account of the creation of the world, etc. If we cannot give credence to the earthly things recorded in the Bible, how, then, can we believe when it speaks of heavenly things? *All* Scripture is *of God.* God cannot err; His Word is infallible. This doctrine is not a palatable doctrine to-day, but, palatable or not, Scripture says, "Thy Word is truth."

We, in whose hearts God has mercifully implanted faith through His Word, are divinely assured: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We need no further proof.

Oh, what a joy it is for the Lutheran preacher, who is thoroughly assured of the Bible's being God's Word, to preach the Word! He does not deal in phrases such as these: "This is my view of this doctrine"; "The apostle seems to say," and the like. No; anointed with the Spirit of prayer, he ascends the pulpit in the full consciousness that Christ's words, "He that heareth you heareth Me," are true. He knows that he is an ambassador of God, beseeching his people in Christ's stead: God is reconciled to you; "be ye reconciled to God."

And how blessed the people who can truthfully sing: "How precious is the Book Divine," etc. (Hymn 111, 1.)

But there is another reason, closely allied to the first, why Timothy is to continue in the things he has learned, why he is to abide by the Holy Scriptures, and that is, because *they alone are able to make man wise unto salvation.*

2.

Paul writes: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Is there a higher wisdom attainable than wisdom unto salvation? Where only is it to be found? In God's inspired Book. However strong "the Light of Asia," the wisdom of men, may be in earthly matters, the people that bask in it sit in "the darkness and shadow of death." Without the Scriptures there is no answer to the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Scripture answers that question. It does more: It is *able to make wise* unto salvation. Being the inspired Word of God, it has this power. It is "a power of God unto salvation," says St. Paul. Where the Word of God, the Gospel, is preached, God exerts His divine power to one end — to save people. Peter, speaking of the Bible's being "able to make wise unto salvation," says to the Christians of Asia Minor: "Ye are born again by the Word of God that liveth." The Word is a living Word; it has life and imparts life; by it people are reborn, made children of God.

Now, what is the wisdom to salvation it imparts? "Faith in Christ Jesus." This is the one great purpose why God inspired the Scriptures, to teach and to impart this wisdom unto salvation, "faith in Christ Jesus"; there is but one way of salvation, for Jew and Gentile, *faith in Christ Jesus.* All Scripture, everything in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, has some connection with this grand object, *wisdom unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus,* be it doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness.

What a wonderful purpose of the Scriptures, Timothy! *Abide by it.* "Preach the Word." Proclaim it as a herald. "Be instant in season, out of season." Stand by this Word as the soldier stands by the flag of his country. Proclaim it as the only means to salvation. Timothy, you have experienced the life-giving power of the Word. Why, then, so timid in your ministry?

Review the members of your own congregation, Timothy. What have many of them formerly been? Idol-worshipers, Diana-worshipers. And now they have turned from idol-worship to worship the true and living God. How did it come about? Paul preached the wisdom unto salvation, Christ Jesus, unto them.

Hear what Paul writes them: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," etc. (Eph. 2, 1—6.)

Now, these selfsame people, once steeped in sin, by God's grace, through the Gospel, "have been built into God's holy temple upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone." (Eph. 2, 19.)

Yes, Timothy, Scriptures *are able to make wise unto salvation.* Continue thou in them. Preach the Word.

And, Timothy, do you recall that great day in Ephesus when "many of them which used curious arts brought their books [of sorcery] together and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." Why did they burn the books? "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed," the Word St. Paul preached to them.

Timothy, you have the same powerful Word. Preach the Word.

And, Timothy, do you remember that other great day in Ephesus, when Demetrius, the silversmith, who made little silver shrines for Diana, which brought no small gain unto the craftsmen, gathered a mob of people, who cried out in wrath for the space of two hours: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"? Why this frenzy? Demetrius gives the reason: "Ye see and hear," he said to his workmen, "that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands, so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught, but also that the temple of Diana should be despised and her magnificence should be destroyed." Hence the cry of wrath and despair: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Such is the power of the Word, Timothy. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Preach the Word.

And let it be said unto the Timothys of to-day, the preachers of the wisdom of God unto salvation: What of it if to-day the cry is loud and long: "Great is the order of the Elks, the Mooses, the Deer!"? "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and patience." Admonish them: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6, 14 ff.)

Friends, in conclusion, what are you to do? You have learned anew that the inspired Book of God is able to make man wise unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus.

Are you told that the old-time Gospel no longer fits into our modern age? What is your answer? The modern man is a sinner; there is salvation in none other but Jesus.

Does Mormonism, Eddyism, Russellism, millennialism, lodgism, try to make converts among you? What is your inquiry? Do you

teach wisdom unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and Him crucified? — No? What does God say to you? This: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine ye have learned and avoid them." *"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned"; abide by the Scriptures.*

There is nothing new under the sun. Modern heathenism is ancient heathenism. "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." So it was in the days of Paul and Timothy, so it is all the more to-day. "In the last days perilous times shall come," says Paul. In these we live. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived"; but God, who is rich in grace, has furnished us with weapons of offense and defense. Which? "Continue thou," preacher and layman, "in the things which thou hast learned and been assured of." Abide by "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make man wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

To this end may God grant us His grace! Amen.

NOTE. — For doctrinal sermons, pure and simple, going more into details, the reader is referred to my *Sermons and Addresses on Fundamentals*, where he will find three separate sermons on the present text.

LOUIS WESSEL.

The Virgin Birth.

Luke 1, 30—35.

Sunday after Sunday we confess in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." In other words, we confess our faith in the miraculous conception and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess our faith in the mystery of mysteries, the miracle of miracles — "God is manifest in the flesh." This doctrine transcends human reason. It is an article of faith; hence we confess, "I *believe*," etc. But our faith has a solid basis — the infallible Word of God.

It is of this mystery that our text speaks. It relates the wonderful story in simple, chaste words, such as only the Holy Ghost could devise.

We are told that the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a lowly maiden named Mary, in the city of Nazareth, with the wonderful message that she should conceive and bear a son, whom she should call Jesus. This Jesus, he continues, "shall be called the Son of the Most High; the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary, a pious woman, doesn't doubt the startling message, since it is an angel of God that delivers it. One thing, however, is incomprehensible to her. "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" She was a pure, virtuous, undefiled maiden; how, then, should she conceive?

The angel solves her perplexing question, saying: *"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*

To strengthen her faith the angel refers Mary to the experience of her cousin Elisabeth, who, despite her old age, solely owing to the promise of God, had also conceived a son (whom we know as John the Baptist), adding: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." And Mary, accepting the explanation, devoutly answers: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

This is the wonderful story of the miraculous conception of our Savior as revealed to Mary by the angel of the Lord. Let us consider —

The Wonderful Message of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary.

It tells —

1. Of the miraculous conception of our Lord Jesus Christ;
2. Of the glorious purpose of His conception.

1.

The Virgin Mary was told: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," etc. Thus Mary was to conceive. All efforts to clear up this mysterious mode of conception by man's language would be like a vain effort to illuminate the sun with a candle light. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee [the Holy Ghost is true God], and the power of the Highest [*i. e.,* the power of the Holy Ghost, a power beyond all human conception] shall overshadow thee." Thus Mary was to conceive by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost. Plain as plain can be is the truth: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost."

The angel proceeds: *"Therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."* It is a "Holy Thing" the Virgin conceived and brought forth. Jesus has not been conceived and born according to the common course of nature. Mary's Son was *true man,* like as we are, *yet holy,* without sin. St. Paul says to the Philippians: "Christ Jesus . . . took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man," etc. Again, to the Corinthians: "He knew no sin." And Jesus Himself later on challenged His enemies: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"

"That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee," the angel says, "shall be called the Son of God." Mary's Son is God's Son. The

Son of God, born of the Father from eternity, in the fulness of time assumed the human nature, became true man, born of the Virgin Mary. What a marvelous condescension of the Son of God to become one of us!

Why was He thus miraculously conceived? "What is born of the flesh is flesh." Man born according to the common course of nature is sinful. This is the reason why the Son of God, on assuming the human nature, chose this wonderful mode of being conceived by the Holy Ghost to assume a holy, sinless human nature, in which should dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

To touch briefly upon the fulfilment. "Now," says Matthew, "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise." It was a birth contrary to the common course of nature. "When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Again we have the plain truth: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

Nor was this miraculous event unexpected. The Lord God, centuries ago, had prepared His people for it. Matthew says: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the Lord through the prophet: Behold, a virgin shall conceive," etc. Is. 7, 14. Isaiah was God's prophet. A prophet is the mouthpiece of God; what the prophet says God says. God said: "A virgin shall conceive." The fulfilment supplies us with the name of the virgin; it is Mary. Again you have the Virgin Birth. Mary's Son's name is to be Emmanuel, "God with us." In one single word, *Emmanuel,* we are told that Mary's Son is to be *true man and true God in one person.* The same prophet, speaking of the same wonderful event, to come to pass seven hundred years later, says: "Unto us *a Child* is born, unto us a Son is given," etc. Is. 9, 6. Again the same truth: the Virgin's Child in the manger, the Mighty God. Nor is this all. Almost on the first page of the Bible we have the well-known promise of the woman's Seed, Christ, who is to bruise the serpent's head.

Small wonder that at the birth of this Child — Jesus, Emmanuel — the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, bringing them "good tidings of great joy" of the Savior's birth.

Small wonder that the very heavens were emptied of all the heavenly host on that holy night, who came down to earth, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Small wonder that a miraculous star was created by God at the birth of this wonderful Child to lead the Wise Men from the East to Bethlehem.

Now we more fully understand St. John's dictum: "The Word [the Son of God] was made flesh"; now St. Paul's statement: "When

the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," appears in a fuller light.

Unbelievers tell us that St. Paul knew nothing, said nothing, of the Virgin Birth. Are they ignorant of the fact that St. Luke, who penned our text, was a frequent companion of St. Paul on his missionary journeys? Dare they suggest that Luke never once spoke a word to St. Paul about the miraculous conception of our Lord, never a word to that St. Paul, who, like no man before or after him, preached Christ and Him crucified? Did Paul not know of the promise of the "woman's Seed" in Gen. 3? Did he not know Isaiah's prophecy of the Virgin's Child? Why did he not teach it explicitly? Because the truth was universally known and accepted. Besides, could anything be plainer than: "God sent forth His Son, *made of a woman*"? Gal. 4, 4.

Contemplating the miraculous conception and birth of the Savior, Paul writes in rapture to Timothy: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh!" Timothy, do you understand this mystery? No. Neither do I. It's a mystery. Our finite minds cannot understand the infinite mind of God. Preach this mystery, Timothy, as a mystery: God manifest in the flesh. Preach it!

To all unbelievers that endeavor to belittle this doctrine of the Virgin Birth we simply oppose the words of the angel Gabriel spoken to Mary: "With God nothing shall be impossible." That sufficed Mary; it suffices us.

2.

Who is He that was thus to be "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"? The angel said: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." The same command goes out to Joseph: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," and the reason is added: "For He shall save His people from their sins." The prophet said: "They shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us."

Here is the purpose of His coming into the flesh: to be our Jesus, our Savior, our Emmanuel. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. . . . A brother cannot redeem a brother; the redemption of his soul is too precious." Ps. 49, 7. 8. Man had transgressed the Law; by man it must be fulfilled. This only the sinless Jesus could do. He only could be the Substitute for sinful man. Hence the writer to the Hebrews says: "Such an High Priest became us who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Only such a High Priest could make complete satisfaction for our sins. This He did once — once for all times — when He offered up Himself on the cross. There is salvation in none other; in Him there is salvation for all.

And this Jesus, through His voice, His Gospel, draws people unto Himself. He invites them tenderly: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thus He saves people, and these saved sinners constitute His kingdom.

And how vast is His kingdom!

The angel said of Him to Mary: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Extraordinary predictions indeed for the Son of the lowly Nazarene maiden! Strange — and still not so strange! Were not the very things spoken of Jesus here but a reiteration of a prophecy made ages ago to David? Jehovah, God had said to David through Nathan: 2 Sam. 7, 12. 13. Mary's son, David's son; Jehovah's Son! Jesus, true man and true God, a King greater than great King David, with a kingdom vastly greater than David's and one to last forever!

Which is this kingdom, and who are the subjects? "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever." It is plain Jesus is not to be an earthly king, but a spiritual King. What, then, is "the house of Jacob"? Says St. Paul (Rom. 9, 6—8): "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel," etc. "The children of the promise," they that believe the promise, the Gospel of Christ, are the spiritual Israel, the house of Jacob. The true Christians everywhere, the holy Christian Church, are the house of Jacob, over which He rules and is to rule forever.

It is that kingdom of which Jesus made a good confession in His trial before Pilate. Questioned about His kingship, Jesus answers: "I am a king." I am not an earthly king; "My kingdom is not from hence"; it is from above; it is the kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Grace. How do I establish it? "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Who belongs to My kingdom? "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

To this Kingdom of Grace, thank God, we belong. We hear His voice; we believe His voice; we are His own. In this kingdom He rules and reigns over us with His Gospel; He guides and protects us; and in His time He will transfer us to His Kingdom of Glory.

How true, therefore, our confession of faith: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"! What does this mean? "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity," etc. (Luther's explanation of Second Article.)

Louis Wessel.

The Atonement.

John 1, 29.

John the Baptist's appearance in the Wilderness of Judea as the prophesied forerunner of Christ resulted in a vast outpouring of people to hear this great preacher of repentance. They came from Jerusalem, the capital of the nation, and the country folk of Judea and all the region round about the river Jordan followed. Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and scribes, publicans and soldiers, all came to hear the eloquent preacher.

John preached the Law in all its severity: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Many came to a deep conviction of their sinfulness. John preached the Gospel in all its sweetness: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Thus John fulfilled his twofold duty: to prepare the way for the Messiah and to point out the Messiah to the people.

To-day our text pictures him in the midst of his activity near Bethabara, beyond the Jordan. He sees "Jesus coming to him."

Now is John's time to bear clear testimony of the Savior. And he does. But before considering this message, let us inquire: Who is this "Jesus coming unto him"? It is He at whose birth the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord proclaiming to them: "Unto you is born this day," etc.; it is He of whom the multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, said: "Glory to God in the highest," etc.; it is He to whose manger wise men from the East made a pilgrimage to worship Him; it is He at sight of whom the aged Simeon rejoiced and exclaimed: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant," etc.; it is He who at the age of twelve told His anxious parents, who found Him in the Temple among the doctors: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

Long years of silence followed. To manhood grown, He steps forth from His obscurity. He is baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist; the heavens are opened, and the Father Himself testifies: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And John the Baptist "saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." V. 34. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus assumes His public ministry. He is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and the latter is completely routed by Jesus' threefold "It is written."

This, then, was the Jesus whom John saw coming to him, when, as God's appointed great forerunner of the Messiah, he was bearing record of Jesus near Bethabara, beyond Jordan.

And what a remarkable testimony it was: —

"Behold the Lamb of God, which Taketh Away the Sin of the World!"

At the very beginning of His public ministry

1. The wonderful Person and *2. The glorious work of the Messiah*

are set forth by John in one short, crisp, telling sentence. In one brief, terse statement the entire mediatorial work of the Savior is announced, with the cross on Calvary looming in the background.

1.

Surrounded by a vast throng of people, all eager to hear the great preacher's message, John the Baptist sees "Jesus coming to him." With outstretched index-finger pointing to Jesus, he cries out with a loud voice: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." All eyes of that large audience, numbering perhaps thonsands of people, are fastened upon Jesus, whom they now hear proclaimed as "the Lamb of God." What a sensation that message must have caused among the people! This Jesus the Lamb of God! The long-expected Messiah now actually manifest in the flesh!

"Behold," says John, look intently upon this Jesus walking in your midst. I have all-important things to say about Him; things that pertain to your eternal salvation. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He that hath eyes to see, let him see.

God grant that we fasten the eyes of our faith on this Jesus to-day and hear the glorious testimony of John the Baptist concerning the Lamb of God with grateful hearts — grateful at the greatness of God's love that has procured for us miserable sinners such a divine Redeemer.

Now, what are we to behold? "Behold," this Jesus is *"the Lamb of God."* God Himself provided this Lamb, selected this Lamb, to redeem Israel from all its sin. As Abraham said to Isaac, whom he was to offer for a burnt offering at the command of God: "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering," so it was God Himself who had appointed this Jesus to be an offering for the sin of the world.

In his great Pentecost sermon, Peter tells the assembled multitude: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man of God approved among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know — Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Again, St. Peter says in his first epistle: "Christ was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world" to be the Redeemer of mankind, "but was manifest in these last

times for you." 1 Pet. 1, 20. And it is John the Baptist who can point out Jesus to the people as the realization of that eternal decree, saying: This is the Lamb of God whose coming was promised and who has now appeared in your midst.

And, brethren, as we look upon Jesus in the light of our text, let us thank God for the fact that our redemption, from all eternity, rests in the hands of God and therefore is certain and sure. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is indeed and in truth our Sin-bearer.

Who is this Lamb of God? John the Baptist points to "Jesus coming to him." Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Lamb of God. But is not this Jesus a man, a true man? Yes. And can a mere man take away the sin of the world? No. Scripture says: "None of them can by any means redeem," etc. Ps. 49, 8. 9. But this Jesus is not a mere man only, He is at the same time "the Lamb of God," *very God of very God.* John the Baptist knew Him to be such. Had he not heard the voice of the Father from heaven at the baptism of Jesus: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? Speaking of the prerogatives vouchsafed to the Israelites, Paul says: "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God, blessed forever." And again, writing to the Corinthians, Paul says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." This Jesus of whom John testifies is *"God manifest in the flesh,"* true God and true man in one person.

Only such a unique person could be "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Christ must be man that He might suffer and die; but as no mere man could bear the sin of the human race, together with the wrath of God and the curse of the Law, nor satisfy infinite divine justice nor overcome death, hell, and the devil, it was necessary that He should at the same time be true God." (*Dietrich's Cat.,* Qu. 234.) Only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse us from all sin. 1 John 1, 7.

Truly, the name whereby this Jesus of Nazareth shall be called is "the Lord [Jehovah], our Righteousness." Now, since Jehovah Himself fulfils Jehovah's demands, our righteousness before God is perfect and we, brethren, may rest assured that we "are bought with a price." 1 Cor. 6, 20.

And this Lamb of God, who as our High Priest was to make atonement for our sins, was an *innocent* Lamb. And that, too, was necessary. "Such an High Priest became us," etc. Heb. 7, 26. And *willingly* He went into death for us. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." 1 Pet. 2, 23. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet," etc. Is. 53, 7.

Such, then, dear brethren, is the person of the "Lamb of God most blameless" that made atonement for the sins of the world.

2.

John the Baptist testifies of Christ, the Lamb of God, that He *"taketh away the sin of the world."* To this work of Christ we shall now direct our attention.

"He taketh away the *sin* of the world." Why was that necessary? God had created man righteous and holy. Then came that awful catastrophe — the fall of man. Thus "sin entered into the world and death by sin." And sin separated between us and God. God pronounced a curse upon every sinner. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." In ourselves there was no way of escaping this terrible curse. What we could not do Christ did for us: He took away the sin of the world. How? Let us revert to the text. It says: "The Lamb . . . taketh away . . . sin." The people to whom John the Baptist spoke understood this allusion perfectly. In the Old Testament the people were bidden to offer up unto God lambs without blemish and without spot to make satisfaction for the people's sin. Especially on the great day of the Passover. (Here relate the story of the Passover. Ex. 12, 3—49; cf. 1 Cor. 5, 7.)

Thus the people of Israel were continually reminded of the coming of the true Lamb of God, who by one offering was to make satisfaction for the sins of the world once and for all times. Now the true sacrificial Lamb had come, and John points Him out to the people as the one "that taketh away the sin of the world."

How did Christ do this? He took the sins of the world and imputed them to Himself. Thus He became our Substitute. In plain words St. Paul, speaking of God's being in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, tells us how Christ brought about this reconciliation. He says: "God hath made Him to be sin *for us* who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." We had sin; we were guilty. The guiltless, sinless Christ takes the place of the sinners. Christ "for us," our Substitute. O blessed truth! *Christ for us!* "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all," says Isaiah. "He bare our sins," says St. Peter. "He taketh away the sin of the world," says our text. Christ was the one great universal sinner in the eyes of God and was dealt with accordingly. God did this; God made Christ to be sin for us. Why? God's mercy to us impelled Him to impute our sins to the sinless Christ, so that He might impute the perfect righteousness of Christ, acquired by His life, His sufferings, and His death, to us. Where is this righteousness to be found? "In Him," in Christ.

Thus atonement was made for the sins of the world. Thus "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The Savior's

entire life, from the manger in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, from His taking upon Himself the form of a servant to His obedience to His death on the cross, was a taking away the sins of the world. And when He cried out on Golgotha, "It is finished!" the work of atonement was completed. The Lamb of God, our Great High Priest, had given Himself as a sacrifice to atone for sin and thus to blot out the handwriting that was against us.

This, then, is the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Jesus to the multitudes near Bethabara, beyond Jordan.

The Pharisees in his audience, of course, were of the opinion that they needed no Savior. They turned a deaf ear to John's sweet Gospel-message, rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. But to many his message "gave knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin"; it "gave light to them that sat in darkness," etc. Luke 1, 77. 79.

And you, brethren, have in spirit been with the multitudes listening to John the Baptist. The Gospel-message: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," is for you and for me. By God's grace we have come to a knowledge of our sins. We know that we daily sin much in thoughts, words, and deeds and deserve nothing but punishment. We know that, if God would deal with us according to His divine justice, we should be lost, one and all.

But God is a God of mercy. In Christ His infinite wisdom found a way to grant mercy to the fallen. In Christ, our Sin-bearer, brethren, let us seek refuge again and again for our sin-stricken, troubled conscience. Let us again and again, with the eyes of faith, look to our crucified Christ, "who bore our sins in His own body on the tree," and in that great burden of sin let us see our sins nailed to the cross, buried in His grave.

Is this message too great, too overwhelming, for you? Hear it again: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world.*" You belong to the world. So, no matter who you are, — a scarlet Samaritan woman or a Mary Magdalene, a Peter who denied his Master or a Judas who betrayed Him, — there is forgiveness for you in the blood of the Lamb. The Savior's invitation is: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come just as you are, come penitently to the foot of the cross. "Be ye reconciled to God." "Know that ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1, 19. "Just as I am, without one plea," etc. Amen.

LOUIS WESSEL.

The New Birth.

1 Pet. 1, 22. 23.

The Apostle Peter writes to the Christians of Asia Minor: "Ye are born again." That is a momentous truth. Just what does it mean? You are born again means you have passed from death to life, having been children of wrath, you have become children of God; you are heirs of eternal salvation. You are, indeed, blessed people.

Had this always been the case with these Christians? No. We learn from this epistle that formerly they had been heathen. We are told that their life had been a "vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers." How could it have been otherwise? Heathen parents can but rear heathen children. The children naturally followed the footsteps of their fathers. Thus it had gone on for generations. They knew no better. They "lived according to their lusts in their ignorance"; they "wrought the will of the Gentiles, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Their lusts, their evil desires, had governed their lives solely. So their life was one, as St. Paul elsewhere depicts the heathen life, "without God, without Christ, without hope," and the end, if a change had not taken place, eternal damnation.

But a wonderful change had come to pass — they had been born again; they had been raised from spiritual death to spiritual life.

How had it been brought about? By their own reason or strength? Why, no; impossible. They had been "dead in trespasses and sins." Can a dead person will to live? Can a dead person desire to be brought to life? Can a spiritually dead person cooperate, or even desire to cooperate, to be brought to spiritual life? No; he is dead.

Well, then, how had this new birth been brought about in the lives of these Asiatic Christians?

At the very beginning of the epistle the Apostle Peter intones a wonderful hymn of praise on the mercy of God shown to these heathen people. Reminding them of the "abundant mercy" of God who had "begotten them unto a living hope," he exhorts them to thank and praise God therefor, saying: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. 1 Pet. 1, 3. 4.

Truly, a most wonderful change had been wrought in the lives of these heathens by being born again. In time past they were not a people, but were now the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Pet. 2, 10.

How had this new birth been accomplished? This we may learn from our text. True, the principal purpose of St. Peter in the present paragraph is to exhort the brethren: "Love one another." This ad-

monition, however, he bases on the fact of their "having been born again by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." These words, simple and yet so deep, tell us how this new birth was brought about. From the environment of this passage we may also learn how the new birth manifests itself. So let us view the text from this angle.

The New Birth.

1. How it is accomplished; 2. How it manifests itself.

1.

The apostle reminds the Christians of Asia Minor of God's abundant mercy shown them in begetting them again unto a "lively hope." "Ye are born again by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Plainly this says that the new birth is a work of God solely and only. But used means, the means of grace, to bring it about; "you are born again *by the Word of God.*" Which is this Word? The next verse tells us this "Word of God" is "the Word of the Lord," "the Gospel preached unto you." And the preceding verse says they have "obeyed the truth," believed the truth, "through the Spirit," that is to say, the Holy Spirit wrought faith in their hearts through the preaching of the truth, the Gospel-truth, and thus they were born again. — Bring the Gospel to the people, and you bring the Holy Ghost to the people, who by means of this "Word of God" performs the miracle of the new birth in them.

The Christians of Asia Minor, says St. Peter, were "born again by the Word of God," the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

How was that carried out practically? The congregations to whom Peter writes were founded by St. Paul on his well-known missionary journeys. What did he preach? A beautiful summary we have in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (5, 19): "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The world, says he, was at enmity with God; it had transgressed the holy Law of God. "There is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." A reconciliation must be effected. Man could not bring it about. God's love to the world, lost in sin, prompted Him to do it. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." How did He reconcile the world unto Himself? God "made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Christ became our Substitute. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree," expiated them. The cry from the cross: "It is finished," proclaimed the glorious truth: God is reconciled. In Christ, God now looks upon man as though he had never offended Him. In plain words this is expressed thus: "not imputing their trespasses unto them." So God is reconciled. But, St. Paul said, God's love to the sinner

prompted Him to do still more. In order that the sinner should come into actual possession of salvation, God committed unto His ambassadors "the Word of Reconciliation." I and my associates, says St. Paul, are "ambassadors for Christ." We are to cry out to a rebellious world: "God is reconciled"; God beseeches you by us; "we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." Believe this Word of God; accept the reconciliation, and the deed is done. This is the Gospel-message. "Preach the Gospel to every creature," so said Christ Himself in the Great Commission. Preach the glad tidings of reconciliation, of pardon to the world, and whosoever believes this Gospel is saved, is born again.

Such was *"the Word of God,"* the Gospel preached to the Christians of Asia Minor, through which they were born again.

But, the question arises: When the Gospel, God is reconciled in Christ, was preached to them, did they have the power of themselves to accept? No. And still they were born again by that Word of God? And still they came to faith? Yes. Well, how am I to understand this?

Take an illustration. Convicted of his sinfulness, the jailer at Philippi cried out in the anguish of his heart, "What must I do to be saved?" Do? What could he do? Heathen that he was, he was dead in trespasses and sins. How was the jailer brought to faith? By the powerful Word of God. He was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Put your trust in Jesus, the Savior from sin. He can save, and He alone. "Believe on the Lord Jesus." This was Gospel. Through this Gospel the Holy Ghost wrought faith in his heart; thus he was born again, thus he passed from death to life. The same night, we read, the apostles further instructed him in the Word of God, and "he was baptized, he and all his, . . . and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Acts 16, 31.

And this simple Gospel has such a divine power to raise the spiritually dead to spiritual life? Yes. Do you still inquire, How is that possible? Peter says: "Ye are born again by the Word of God *which liveth.*" The Word, being the Word of God, has divine power, and to emphasize that thought, he says: "The Word of God liveth." It's a living Word, a Word that has life and imparts life. This living Word enters into the spiritual corpse, and there is life. A magnet imparts "life" to the steel it comes in contact with; electricity causes the dead wire to become a live wire; the living Word causes the spiritually dead person to become spiritually alive. Such is the power of the Gospel, *"the Word of God which liveth!"*

The apostle compares the Word to a seed. Suppose you knew nothing of the power, the life, resident in a seed and you were told: This seed will produce corn; this, wheat; this, a majestic oak. Impossible! you would exclaim. Still the seemingly impossible thing

is done every year, as you know. Such is the power of the Gospel: *You are born again of incorruptible seed,* by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

Jesus spoke this living Word to that man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, and he was born again; He spoke it to the Samaritan woman, and she believed; St. Paul preached it to Lydia, and the Lord opened her heart that she attended to the words spoken by Paul.

But why multiply instances? You have experienced this life-giving power of the Word; you believe in Jesus as your Savior. Scripture says: *"Whosoever believeth* that Jesus is the Christ *is born of God."* And this glorious fact was brought about by the Holy Ghost; for, says Scripture: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord *but by the Holy Ghost."* And so, to quote another Bible-passage: "Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God."

Let us thank God for His abundant mercy.

This new birth, this new life, manifests itself. We shall speak briefly of the manner in which it manifests itself.

2.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently, being born again . . . by the Word of God."

The apostle's thought is this: As soon as the Holy Spirit works faith in us by causing us to obey the truth, so soon our souls, our hearts, are purified, and so soon also does sanctification begin. Faith and sanctification are of the operation of the Spirit. Now, to pursue the trend of the apostle's thought, one manifestation of the new life, one manifestation of sanctification, is brotherly love, unfeigned love. Show it; prove it; *love one another* and let this love be *from a pure heart,* that is, let it be a sincere love, free from hypocrisy or self-interest. Let it, furthermore, be a *fervent* love, one that does not become weary and weak, as is the case oftentimes when our love meets with the cold shoulder or is not acknowledged.

That is a hard lesson to learn. Peter had been taught it in the school of the Master. As you recall, Peter's question once upon a time was: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus said unto him: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven." Matt. 18, 21. 22.

To still further inculcate this Christian virtue of loving one another, the apostle reminds the Christians of their new birth: *Love one another because you are born again.* This new life can and must manifest itself. Love one another. By God's grace you have the power to do so; it is your duty to do so; you are born again.

And that they may grow in this as well as in all other Christian virtues, the apostle admonishes the Christians in the following verses to "desire the sincere milk of the Word." The *"Word of God which liveth"* is both the *seed* and the *nourishment* of the new life.

What a beautiful picture of brotherly love St. Paul depicts in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians! He writes: "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not," etc. 1 Thess. 4, 9. 10.

A few practical examples to show how this brotherly love manifests itself. David had fallen into adultery. Love constrained Nathan to tell David, "Thou art the man." — You see a brother going astray from the fold; love should constrain you to admonish him. You see a brother becoming lukewarm in attending services; love should constrain you to speak to him of the danger of his soul. You hear a brother evil spoken of; love should constrain you to put the best construction on everything. You see a brother bowed down with grief; love should constrain you to comfort him.

Thus the new birth manifests itself in all Christian virtues, also in the one which St. Peter especially calls attention to in our text, unfeigned love of the brethren.

Have you this lively hope in you? And do you show such unfeigned love to the brethren? Amen. LOUIS WESSEL.

The Holy Christian Church.

Eph. 2, 19—22.

How beautiful, how grand, how sublime the conception of Christ's Kingdom of Grace, the holy Christian Church, as pictured by St. Paul! The foundation for this Church is that of the apostles and prophets, Christ Himself being the Corner-stone. This Church, Christ's Church, being built upon such a solid foundation is indestructible: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The stones built upon this foundation are "living stones," Christians, saints — every one of them, and so it is a holy temple. And this building "groweth," and it will grow to the end of time. Stone is placed upon stone, and so it grows. As soon as "strangers," "foreigners," are brought to faith by the Spirit through the Word, they become "living stones" and by that very fact are "builded together for an habitation of God"; by that very fact they are fitted into this glorious temple, in which God lives and dwells with all His mercy.

And how vast is this building! Wherever believers may live; to whatever nationality they may belong; whatever language they may speak, in the eyes of God all are fitly framed together in this one wonderful temple, the holy, Christian Church.

Nor is this all. The Apostle Peter, describing the same Christian

Church from another viewpoint, adds a beautiful thought. The Christians, he says, who, as "living stones," are built upon the "Living Stone," Christ, are at the same time *"a holy priesthood,"* busily *engaged in* the temple to "offer up spiritual sacrifices," busily engaged "to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Pet. 2, 4 ff.) What a wonderful structure this is!

We can but faintly apprehend this glorious truth of the Church's being composed of believers of all nations, kindreds, and tongues. To us this Church is invisible, but "the Lord knoweth them that are His." We confess: "I believe a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." But do we realize the wonderful fact, do we appreciate the abundant mercy of God, that we, as a Christian congregation, are a part of this holy Christian Church?

To bring home to the hearts and minds of the Ephesian Christians the surpassing grace of God in Christ Jesus vouchsafed unto them by building them into this holy temple of God, the apostle penned these lines: "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone."

This great grace God has also granted us. To us, too, apply the words: "Ye also are builded together [in Christ] for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

With a heart filled with thanksgiving, let us learn anew what the apostle Paul teaches us about —

The Holy Christian Church.

We learn: —

1. *Who belongs to this Church;*
2. *What are the marks of the Church;*
3. *What is the proper use of the doctrine of the Church.*

1.

"Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." These words answer the question, Who belongs to the Church?

The Christians at Ephesus had been "Gentiles in the flesh." V. 11. In their lives there was a marked distinction between once and now, as the verses preceding our text show. Once they "walked according to the course of this world" (v. 2). Once they "were far off" (v. 13), separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (v. 12). Truly, a most deplorable spiritual condition!

Now, however, says the apostle, "Ye, who sometimes were far off,

are made nigh by the blood of Christ." How did this blessed change come about? Christ came "and preached peace to you"; thus you were converted.

And what a wonderful change it was! "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners," such as have no privileges in the commonwealth of the true Israel; but you are "fellow-citizens with the saints." Through the preaching of peace, through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit wrought faith in your hearts, you became believers, true Christians, *saints,* people whose hearts are separated from the world and dedicated to God. And by that very act of God you became citizens in the city of God, the Church.

What is said of the Ephesian Christians is true of us also. We are Christians, "saints in Christ Jesus." We are reconciled to God by the cross of Christ. Christ's blood and righteousness our beauty are, our glorious dress. We are holy in the eyes of God, "fellow-citizens with the saints" in the city of God, the holy Christian Church.

This same blessed truth the apostle gives expression to by changing the image. By preaching peace unto you, he says to the Ephesians, you "are of the household of God," you belong to God's family, you are children of God. Through the preaching of the Gospel the Spirit wrought in you the knowledge of your sinfulness and the blessed knowledge of the Savior from sin. Thus, through faith in Christ Jesus, you were adopted into God's family, you became children of God.

And you, brother, sister, are you a child of God? Do you fold your hands and pray in childlike faith, "Abba, Father"? Rest assured you are a member "of the household of God."

Again the image changes. At your conversion, says the apostle, you were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone." The Ephesians, once heathen, now Christians, are not only citizens in the city of God, not only are they members of the family of God; but, from another point of view, they themselves are stones, "living stones," composing the temple of God.

How beautifully and forcefully the apostle brings home to our hearts God's great grace in Christ! When we were dead in sins by nature, He quickened us, saved us by grace through faith, and now we are fellow-citizens with the saints, children of God, living stones in God's holy temple. And the images to picture the one holy Christian Church, how grand, how sublime!

Who belongs to the Church? Believers only are citizens in the city of God; believers only are children in the family of God; believers only are built on the Corner-stone Christ. So who belongs to the Church? The believers, and the believers only. Hence the Augsburg Confession says: "The Church is properly nothing else than

the congregation of all believers and saints." And hence we confess in the Creed: "I believe a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints."

To us the Church is invisible. But though invisible, still it is knowable; it has infallible marks.

2.

"Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone."

The apostles and prophets are not the foundation of this building. But the foundation is that of the apostles and prophets, that foundation which they laid, namely, through their writings, the Word of God.

Wherever the word of the apostles and prophets is preached, *there Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, is proclaimed* as being the chief Corner-stone and the very Foundation of the Church; there people are built on this foundation, *there is the Church.* All the apostles agree in this: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Wherever the word of the apostles and prophets is preached, there Christ is preached, *there faith in Christ Jesus is wrought in the hearts of people,* there remission of sin is preached, *there,* to say it again, *is the Church.* "My Word," says the Lord, "shall not return unto Me void." He sends it for a purpose — to work faith, to preserve in faith, to save by faith. Wherever the Word is preached, the Lord's promise holds good. The Word, though rejected by many, always bears some fruit. *So the Word is the only mark of the Church.* "God's Word," says Luther, "cannot be without God's people, and God's people cannot be without God's Word." This statement includes the Sacraments, the visible Word, because the Sacraments receive their power and efficacy from the word of God.

Wherever the Gospel of Christ, the grace of Christ, the gracious forgiveness of sins by faith in Christ, is preached *in its truth and purity,* there the Church is found; wherever the *essentials* of the Gospel — the doctrine of the atonement, justification by faith — are not entirely buried by false doctrine, there we may hope to find true believers, who, by a special grace of God, cling only to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus and discard the error that is preached to them. That is to say, members of the invisible Church, true believers, are also found in those erring churches which have not rejected the fundamental truths of the Gospel.

The churches of Galatia had foolishly given ear to the errorists. They were in grave danger of falling from grace, of being removed from the Corner-stone Christ. St. Paul rebukes them sharply: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not

obey the truth?" False doctrine is witchcraft, false doctrine is the devil's work; false doctrine, impure doctrine, cannot save; hence beware of false prophets! But still Paul knew that there must be some among the Galatians who deserved the name "brethren." And so we believe that by God's grace there are true Christians also in those churches that do not teach all that Christ has commanded.

And now, dear brethren, let us thank God for the riches of His grace. The word of the apostles and prophets is proclaimed here in all its truth and purity; hence we are not to doubt that God's temple, the Church, is being built here. We, too, are *fellow-citizens* with the saints, *members of God's family, living stones* in this holy Christian Church, built on the Corner-stone Christ. We are "a habitation of God through the Spirit." The Spirit, through the word of the apostles and the prophets, here, too, adds living stones to the temple, and such as are already living stones are the more firmly cemented on the foundation, more securely established in the faith. The *Word of God* that is preached here, the *Sacraments* that are in use here, *are infallible marks of the Church.*

True, the Bible tells us that in the visible Church there are hypocrites mingled with the true believers. We cannot look into the hearts of people to see who believe and who do not. The hypocrites do not belong to the Church proper, they are dead stones. "God knoweth them that are His." But whosoever among us shudders at the thought that he might not be found blameless in Him and sighs in his heart: Jesus, grant that I may remain in Thee, that I may be and remain a living stone in Thy holy temple, let him rest assured that he is a true member of the holy Christian Church. The very sighing of his heart, flowing from faith, proves that he is a workshop of the Holy Ghost. So let us fervently thank God for the abundant mercy shown us in fitting us into His holy temple by faith in Jesus and let us pray Him daily to strengthen and to augment our faith.

3.

We "are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Hence it is our Christian duty, our privilege, yea, our delight, to search the word of the apostles and prophets in order to become the more firmly rooted and grounded in them and thus to become all the more intimately connected with Christ, the Foundation and the Corner-stone of the Church. Since faith is the all-deciding factor of membership in the Church of Christ, we should daily heed the apostle's admonition: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves." We should take heed to be and remain members of the invisible Church and, to this end, adhere to the Church of the pure Word and confession.

Again, we are "living stones" in this "holy temple." Through the Spirit we have passed from death to life; let us manifest this

new life and "be holy in all manner of conversation," as becometh people belonging to this holy temple. This grant us, dear Father in heaven!

Lastly, this temple "groweth"; as yet it is not completed. So it is our Christian duty to contribute toward its maintenance and propagation according to our ability. It is our duty and privilege to help spread the Church, to ask "strangers" and "foreigners" to come to our services, in which the Holy Spirit through the Word can and will make them "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God," will make them fit building-material for the temple of the Lord, the one holy Christian Church. Thus the temple groweth. And when the last stone is fitly framed into this building, the scaffold, this world, will be torn down, and the new Jerusalem, the Holy City, will appear in all its unsurpassable splendor on the Last Day, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Amen. LOUIS WESSEL.

FIVE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE.

Sarah.

1 Pet. 3, 1—6.

"Even as Sarah." The Apostle Peter reaches back into "the old time" to recall from among "the holy women" one whom he holds up as an example of Christian womanhood, of the deferential wife and mother. Sarah was blessed with a husband whose exalted and yet affectionate domestic character must have strengthened, guided, and cherished hers. It is not always the most blessed and distinguished woman who attends the most faithfully to her domestic duties and preserves unharmed and untainted that meekness and integrity which is her greatest charm. But in Sarah's character there are several features which prompted the Holy Spirit to recall her to the minds of two apostles who bear witness to her religious character. Paul places her amid the galaxy of ancient worthies; Peter describes the pious adornment of her spirit. Paul records her faithfulness to God; Peter, her deference to her husband. Paul writes of her as a believer; Peter, as a well-doer. Paul exhibits her as an example of Christians in general; Peter, as the mother of all believing women.

Sarah, Mother of Believing Women.

1. Her piety.

Sarah, like Abraham, had grown up in heathen surroundings. All was spiritual darkness in the world about them. They stood alone in their peculiar faith, their faith in the true and living God. Yet it was enough for Sarah that Abraham preferred without hesi-

tation to obey the call of God to leave his kindred. With simple faith she went with him where God would lead. In that strange land they built altars to the Lord and called upon His name: Sichem, Gen. 12, 6; Bethel, Gen. 12, 8; on their return from Egypt, Bethel, Gen. 13, 3. 4; parting from Lot, Gen. 13, 18. Sarah in every case, no doubt, shared in this worship of the true God. And she shared in the promises of God. Gen. 17, 15. 16.

Sarah "trusted in God" (hoped in God), says Peter. She is the mother of all believing women. Christians are a "peculiar" people. Their faith makes them different. They live in a strange world. Their distinction is faith, hope, and trust in God and His Word. This "hidden man of the heart," faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is "precious before God." Peter characterizes this as the finest adornment of Christian womanhood. In this respect Sarah is pointed out as the example of pious, God-fearing womanhood. How much greater light have you than Sarah! You were born, not in a heathen land, as Sarah was, but in a land where the Gospel shines; you are descended, not from heathen parents, as Sarah was, but many of you are daughters of pious fathers and mothers, who taught you in childhood to sing the praise of God, taught you the Savior's love, taught you to fold your hands in prayer. Do you bow at the altar of the true God and worship Him only?

Neglect of religion is the great destroyer of life and the despoiler of the home. How many women — wives, mothers, daughters — live in forgetfulness of the God whom Sarah worshiped; of the Savior whose feet Mary wetted with tears; of the Bible which Eunice and Lois loved; of the cause of the Gospel, accepting which woman has rendered such great service to God and mankind!

Sarah and Abraham had God in common. They loved, served, and obeyed Him and trusted in Him above all things. Where that spirit prevails, there is a happy home. The fear of God is the true foundation of the home. The tribute paid to Zacharias and Elisabeth in the Bible: they were "both righteous before God and walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly." This is the Christian ideal. Where this kinship of soul is missing, there can be no full realization of true happiness in life, in the home. Where only one of the two loves and serves God, there can be no understanding. But the believing part will strive to bring the other in union with Christ. 1 Cor. 7, 13. 14. 16; 1 Pet. 3, 1. 2. Let the woman center all her efforts on winning her household for God.

2. Her love and respect for her husband.

This is a characteristic feature of Sarah's whole life. Think of the extent of Abraham's household — no less than 318 servants, born in his house and trained in the use of arms. Over this household, with the aid of a steward, during her husband's absence, Sarah had

unlimited dominion. Yet there was no pride, arrogance, or jealousy. There is a beautiful confidence and affection between her and her husband. She was Abraham's friend as well as partner and helpmeet, a dutiful wife as well as a gentle mistress of his immense establishment. Sarah never deceived Abraham as Rebekah deceived Isaac. When she would send Hagar and Ishmael away, she did not evade the probable displeasure which this might cause Abraham nor did she "manage" to gain her point. She had too much respect for her husband. She acknowledged him as her lord. She went to him and consulted him about it.

This trait in Sarah's character is held up as an example in the Bible. It is emphasized as the true relationship between husband and wife. 1 Pet. 3, 1. 6; Eph. 5, 22—24; Col. 3, 18; Eph. 5, 33. Husbands and wives are one, and their interests are one. Many wives nowadays neglect to cultivate this loving deference to, and affectionate respect for, their husbands, not because they are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, high or low in position, but just because they are their *husbands.* A clear understanding of the relationship of husband and wife in the home is of utmost importance to-day. Many homes are broken up because of a lack of understanding on this point. A false independence. Where God's Word is not given its rightful due, the divorce will not be abated.

"Jealousy is one of the greatest enemies of marital happiness. It has broken up many a home. . . . It is a disease of the mind rather than of the heart, and both sexes are equally subject to it. When it finds a foothold in the home, suffering untold enters with it both to man and wife. It blasts the happiness of the whole family." (*A. T. Lundholm.*) Prov. 6, 34. 35; 27, 4; Song of Sol. 8, 6. Where faith in Jesus Christ rules the hearts of husband and wife, the poison of jealousy and suspicion can never enter in. They must pray for and with each other that their love may grow and deepen with time.

3. Her watching over, and care for, her son.

Two reasons may be given why Isaac was peculiarly dear to Sarah: first, he was her only son, her only child, the child of her old age; secondly, she knew that God had designated him as the seed through which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. All the strong feelings of her womanly and maternal nature were centered upon him. And she showed her love for her boy in a practical way: she kept him from the evil influence of a bad associate, Ishmael, abetted by Hagar. Ishmael was thirteen years older than Isaac. He was a wild, rude, ungodly youth. Gen. 16, 11. 12. Sarah observed Ishmael mocking. Gen. 21, 9; Gal. 4, 29 (persecuting). She then and there determined to separate the two boys. She saw that there was more danger of Ishmael's ruling Isaac than the probability of Isaac's reforming Ishmael. And her determination to guard her son from contamination met with the approbation of God. Gen. 21, 11. 12.

"Parents are committed to this one task in life: the rearing of their children for God, a task that demands their united efforts. To attain that result, they must pray together, admonish and discipline and encourage together, or the one will tear down what the other builds up." (*A. T. Lundholm.*)

"It is an awfully solemn thing to be a parent, to be entrusted with the guardianship of immortal spirits just entering upon life, whose character and destiny depend to so great a degree upon our faithfulness in duty. What trust can be more precious, what responsibility more vast? Yet, when rightly engaged in, there is no class of duties more fraught with pleasure to the child of God. Few joys are to be compared with those of the faithful parent as day by day he watches the unfolding of the tender mind and impresses upon it those great truths that are capable of making it forever blessed. And if he rejoices 'with trembling,' he yet 'derives profound satisfaction from the thought that, as he is instrumentally the source of the natural, so he may become that of its spiritual life,' and that he is the chosen means through which that soul, with all its vast capacities, may be added as a rich jewel to the Savior's crown." (*The Christian Home,* J. A. Collier.)

The one duty that underlies all others is love. The apostle exhorts mothers to "love their children." Titus 2, 4. This duty is insisted upon by Scripture with a frequency and earnestness which is notable. It is so frequently observable to-day that mothers and fathers seem to have so little of this elemental part of nature itself. "Hard as the flinty rock must be that heart whose affections do not flow in a warm, rich current towards the child whom God has given it." (*Collier.*)

God has appointed the parent to be the chief educator of the child and has made the home the scene where, most of all, he is to be schooled in divine truth and trained for His service. Deut. 4, 9; 11, 19; Eph. 6, 4. "Would that in all Christian families might be witnessed the spectacle which in past generations has characterized the households of faith, and which is still frequently met with, of the family gathered upon a Sabbath evening in a pleasant circle, repeating their lessons from the Bible and Catechism and holding delightful converse on the grand themes of redemption! Now an infant voice lisps forth a little hymn; then others recite their verses or narrate some 'sweet story of old' gathered from pages of Scripture, the parents interspersing the exercises with necessary comments or appropriate words of kind counsel; then the song of praise ascends from the little circle, whose mingled voices symbolize their glad union of hearts; and then the fervent prayer. Upon such a scene, we may well believe, the angels gaze with delighted interest, while the Father smiles on it approvingly. Happy is the home that is enriched with

such associations. Happy the child or man whose earliest memories are linked in with such hallowed hours. They cannot be forgotten, and often they arrest the wanderer and are made the means of bringing him back to his Father's house." (*Collier.*)

An example of the triumph of Christian faith is related of a heathen mother who became a true believer in Christ. For many years she was the only Christian in the family, her husband and nine children giving no evidence of piety. She felt that God had committed to her trust ten unconverted souls, and she determined that, if they were lost, it should not be through her neglect of duty. She aimed, first of all, at leading a consistent Christian life and improved every opportunity for instruction and tender warning. Her chief reliance was upon believing prayer to her Savior. She presented each child separately before the Throne of Grace, and in due time she prevailed with God. The first convert was her eldest daughter; the two eldest sons followed soon thereafter; and successively the whole of the nine children made a profession of faith. One sorrow remained — the husband and father was still impenitent. He was advancing in years and had begun to form the habit of intemperance. The faithful wife resolved on one final effort. After a night of anguished supplication she plead once more with her husband, reminding him of her many prayers, of their children's conversion, and his probable separation from her in eternity. God opened his heart, and he yielded, and in a few days the family circle was complete in Christ. That mother was abundantly rewarded. She saw all her children connected with pious families, listened to some of them as preachers of the Gospel. Most of her grandchildren were members of the Church, one a missionary to a foreign field, and for each of the unconverted she continued her daily prayer.

Ye who would be Sarah's daughters, be adorned with her "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

G. E. Hageman.

Ruth.

Ruth 1, 16. 17.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, the celebrated English author, once proposed to a distinguished company of men and women of a literary club, at a time when infidelity was the mode of the day, to entertain them with a story which was a work of rare merit and charm. Without telling them the details, he read to them the story of Ruth. They were delighted with its beautiful simplicity and the charm of its heroine. All were eager to learn the name of the author, who, all agreed, could grace any circle of literature and fashion. But they were confounded and dismayed when told that this narrative was found in the neglected and despised Bible. Fiction has never

produced a tale of such beauty, which, while it awakens the deepest emotions, leaves on the mind no stain that can soil even an angel's purity.

However, the story of Ruth is not chiefly of interest because of its literary merit. Placed between the Book of Judges and the books of Samuel, it plays an important part in God's plan for the salvation of the human race. Notice the significant place it occupies in the Bible. During the times of the patriarchs and of Moses, God had scattered a number of stars of hope and promise of the Messiah in the spiritual heavens, lighting the path of the chosen people of God on the way to the land of promise. But after Israel's settlement in Canaan there occurs a long period of disobedience, of war, of oppression, of victory and defeat, during the time of the judges. The stars of hope and promise seemed to wane and fade out during that gloomy period. Then the Holy Spirit places this peaceful pastoral in the way, before relating the history of the rise of the chosen people during the golden age of Israel.

Ruth, the Gleaner, or, How God Blesses Those Who Are Faithful to Him.

The story in brief is as follows. The rains had failed in Judah, and a severe famine ensued. A certain family of the tribe of Judah, composed of husband and wife and two children, is having a hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door. Finally Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, Chilion and Mahlon, decide to emigrate to a Gentile country beyond Jordan, to the east of the Dead Sea, the land of Moab. Here they lived in peace for a while, when a new affliction befell the family. Elimelech, the husband and father, died, leaving Naomi a sad widow, with her two boys, in a strange land. In the course of time her two sons married two young women of Moab, Orpah and Ruth. They lived together happily for ten years, when the destroyer again broke the family circle. Naomi's two sons died suddenly. Naomi's thoughts then turned westward, to the home of her youth, the land of her people. She had heard "that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread." She decided to return to the land of her fathers. Her two daughters-in-law accompanied her. "And they went on the way to return to the land of Judah," — three widows. But on the borders of Moab, Naomi begged Orpah and Ruth to return to their own land and to stay with their own people. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her." It was then that Ruth made that beautiful confession of affection and love which has made this story famous. Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem of Judah about the time of the harvest, and Ruth went into the fields to glean for their support. The ground on which she was so employed, belonged to a wealthy man by the name of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech. Boaz treated her kindly. Finding that

Ruth was his kinswoman by marriage and a nearer relative having surrendered his rights according to the Law of Moses, Boaz married Ruth before the elders of the city. The son born to them was named Obed, who was "the father of Jesse, the father of David." And David is the royal ancestor of our Lord. Such is the story. It plays a very significant part in God's plan of salvation.

Let us note a few things. Naomi and Elimelech and their two sons left Judah as Israelites. They lived in the land of Moab as Israelites. Naomi returned from Moab to Judah still faithful to the true God and brought Ruth with her as a believer in the true God. It took courage to do that. It takes courage to be a Christian. John 12, 42. 43. How many men and women of to-day, like the chief rulers of Jerusalem, believe in Jesus Christ in their hearts, but do not confess Him before the world because of their fear of what people may say! — 2 Cor. 12, 10. Think of Lystra, of Derbe. Here is a man who was not ashamed to confess Jesus Christ. "I take pleasure in. . . ." Elimelech and Naomi were not ashamed of their God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in Jesus Christ.

"You and I live in a God-hating world; we live in a compromising age, an age in which men professing to be Christians are trying to please the world and carry on the Church of Christ so that there will be no difference between the Church and the world. Now, in a God-hating world like this and in a compromising age like this it takes courage to be an out-and-out soldier of Jesus Christ. It takes more courage than a great many of you have. Many a man of to-day who has great courage, who has courage enough to be a soldier, who has courage enough to go to war, courage enough to go to the front, courage enough to stand on the firing-line and stand in the face of a galling fire from the enemy's guns, has not courage enough to go back to the barracks at night and kneel down and say his prayer and endure the chaff of his fellow-soldiers. It takes courage, the sublimest courage, to be an out-and-out Christian." (R. A. Torrey.)

Five reasons why every man and woman should confess Jesus Christ before the world: —

a) Because He is such a glorious Lord and Master. Second Article.

b) Because of the influence of Christian confession on others. Every one here has an influence, either for Jesus Christ or against Jesus Christ. There is no man or woman or child here to-night who, if they confessed Jesus Christ before the world as their Lord and lived in accordance with that confession, would not have an influence to bring somebody else to Christ. (Naomi won Ruth, 1, 16. 17.) On the other hand, there is no man, woman, or child here to-night who, if he does not confess Christ, no matter how well he lives, has not an influence against Christ; and the better he lives, the more his in-

fluence is against Christ, for people look at him and say: Look at that man; as far as I can see, he lives just as well as these professed Christians, and he is not a Christian, does not profess faith in Christ. I don't see the need of becoming a Christian.

c) Because it is the only way to obtain the fulness of blessing that is in Jesus Christ. Matt. 10, 32. 33. "In our great Civil War, when one of our generals won a great victory, it was the custom of the members of Congress of his district to propose a vote of thanks to him on the floor of the American Congress. It was the highest ambition of generals to be thus mentioned upon the floor of Congress. I remember that grand old hero General Howard once saying to me: 'Torrey, there was one proud day of my life, and that was when a vote of thanks was given to me on the floor of Congress by the whole Congress for my stand at Gettysburg.' But what is it to be mentioned on the floor of any parliament or congress down here to being mentioned in the court of heaven by the Lord Jesus Himself?" The writer recalls the words of one of our successful and consecrated young pastors who reported at one of our conferences how he does mission-work in his church. He has a membership committee in his church, composed of consecrated men and women, to whom is given the task of winning certain definite people for Christ. They not only visit these people, but pray for them. Often these people, after the objects of their prayer and work have been baptized or confirmed, remark to the pastor: "This is the happiest day of my life." They share in the joy of the angels over one sinner who repented.

d) Because by such a confession alone we avoid a shameful sin. "When you stop to think what Christ has done for us — how He left heaven with all its glory and came down to earth with all its shame; how He was scourged and crowned with thorns; how He bore shame and reproach; how He was spat upon and buffeted and nailed to the cross for you and me; how, although He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich; how, though being in the form of God, He thought it not a thing to be grasped to be equal to God, but humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant and was obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross; how He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities — if, men and women, knowing that, you will not confess Jesus Christ because of the fear of man or fear of loss in business or fear of loss of caste in society, then you are cowards, poltroons, ingrates of the basest and blackest kind. You cannot get around it; you know it is God's truth." (After a sermon by R. A. Torrey.)

Two other considerations in the story of Ruth may be noted particularly.

a) The gleaner in the barley fields of Bethlehem is the great-grandmother of Israel's great minstrel king, who in turn is one of

the ancestors of the world's blessed Redeemer, who was the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and Morning Star whose hallowed radiance fills the world with peace and glory. Is. 11, 10; 4, 2; Ps. 132, 11. 17; Rom. 15, 12; Matt. 1, 3; Rev. 5, 5; 22, 16; Acts 13, 22—23. About eleven hundred years after the birth of the son of Ruth, Jesus was born in the same Bethlehem of Judah. Luke 2, 11. 14.

b) As from the small acorn, flung from its parent stem by the heedless wind, grows the majestic oak, even so out of these apparently insignificant events in the life of Naomi and Ruth has grown the great kingdom of God, embracing all races, whose ruler is the Son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of humble, shy Ruth. There was a purpose in the mingling of Jewish and Gentile blood in the union of Boaz and Ruth. The Savior was to bless not only the Jews, but the Gentiles as well. We see in the history of the Savior that wise men, Gentiles, come from the East at His birth. The Gentiles did eat the crumbs which fell from the Master's table. Jews conspired against Him. Gentiles condemned and crucified Him. But His last command is to go to "all nations." At Pentecost the disciples spoke in the tongues of many nations of the wondrous works of God. See also Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and note that he emphasizes so strongly God's grace upon him as well as the *Gentiles* — "we" and "ye" (1, 11. 12. 13; 2, 1—4. 11—18); "hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us," Jews and Gentiles. He did so in Ruth. Eph. 3, 5. 6; Rom. 16, 26; Acts 9, 15.

There was a time when God had the whole human race before Him, when He taught this religion that man should believe in the Son of God through whom He would reveal Himself as God and Savior. That was in Eden, where God spoke to fallen man of the Seed of the woman, who would come and bruise the serpent's head. God pointed Adam and Eve and their descendants to Jesus and said: Hear Him, believe on Him. This shall be your religion. Then ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. And God continued to teach this through His prophets. His blessing was to be for all nations. Ps. 33, 8. All the world should acknowledge Him as Lord and serve Him only who promised the Messiah, His Son. God also declared that He would not let the Gentiles remain forever in their false, self-made religion, but in the time of fulfilment He would send a mighty call to all nations to give up their own religion and to turn to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as the Son of God, the Savior, the express image of God. Is. 11, 10; 49, 6. 26. This call has gone out into all the world by the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit is gathering from all nations a peculiar people, a people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. Christianity is the world religion, the one and only religion which is universal, limited by no geographical boundaries, by no language, by no climes, by no race.

G. E. Hageman.

Hannah.

1 Sam. 1, 11. 26—28.

Following the days of Moses and Joshua "there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord nor yet the works which He had done for Israel." Judg. 2, 10. And for three hundred years Israel's history is filled with apostasy and punishment, repentance and deliverance, and returning again to their stubborn way. At the close of that gloomy period we have the history of a family which illustrates how low religion had fallen in Israel, the story of a high priest and his lewd and wicked sons. The pitiful and tragic end of the aged Eli is one of the most touching incidents of the Bible, and with it the sacred record closes the door on Israel's dark ages. At the same time God opens the door of a new era under His grace, and on the threshold stands a woman in prayer to the Lord of hosts, honoring Him with a new and significant name, which ever after rises from the lips of faithful believers. It is Hannah, the mother of one of the most distinguished men of the Old Testament, Samuel.

"Both before and since the days when they ministered to our Lord and, following Him to Calvary with their tears, were the last at the cross and the first at the sepulcher, the Church has exhibited many instances of high and holy heroism on the part of women. However deserving of the name in ordinary circumstances, where martyrs' fires were fiercely burning and scaffolds flowed with blood and prisons overflowed with captives, women have not showed themselves to be the 'weaker sex.' On the contrary, when adherence to principle involved painful sacrifice, men have found such support in gentle women as I have seen the green and pliant ivy lend the wall it clothed and clung to when that, undermined and shaken, was ready to fall. Daughters of Eve, but no tools of the tempter to seduce, with a babe at their breast and others at their knee, they have encouraged men to withstand temptation and boldly face the storm, counting rank, home, living, and all things else but loss for Christ. Such was the spirit of Hannah." (Thomas Guthrie.)

Hannah, the Gracious.

1. Her patience.

To Elkanah, the husband of Hannah, certainly belongs the honor of resisting the current of unbelief of his time and in an age of almost universal defection clinging to the cause and the house of God. Praying, waiting, expecting, this devout man maintained the practise of true religion and repaired year after year to the Lord's house at Shiloh. And Hannah was his true helpmeet and brave support. In what esteem he held her appears in the tender terms with which he tries to soothe her grief. 1 Sam. 1, 8.

What was her grief? Her great trial was to be childless, a grievous disappointment; regarded so by every Jewish woman. But her

trial, like a wound into which cruel hands rub salt, was made intolerable torture by the insolent reproaches of a rival. The other wife, a rude, coarse, proud, and vulgar woman, who had children, triumphed over Hannah. Elkanah loved Hannah more than her. Peninnah saw that, and to be avenged she poured the vials of her wrath on the head of Hannah. 1, 6.

In these circumstances, Hannah teaches us how to bear our trials, whatever they may be, and how to seek, and where to find, relief. Weep she did, but no word of reproach passes her lips. Reviled, she reviled not again. Where others would have been roused to fury and would have retaliated, she said nothing. Instead, she prayed. Her patience could not conquer Peninnah, but her prayers might achieve a greater conquest. She might prevail upon God. In her trouble she sought the Lord. Think of Paul. 1 Cor. 4, 11—13. The example of our Lord. 1 Pet. 2, 19—24; 3, 8. 9; Matt. 5, 11; Rom. 5, 3.

2. Her meekness.

It is said that in a gale, when the storm has risen to a hurricane, the force of the wind has been observed to beat down the waves, producing a temporary and comparative calm. Similar is the effect sometimes produced by overwhelming trials. By their very pressure and weight upon the sufferer they abate both the violence and the expression of feelings. It also happens in trials that we can more easily bear a heavy blow from God's hand than a light one from man's. But notice the remarkable meekness in Hannah.

Smarting under cruel reproaches, overwhelmed with grief and disappointment, "in bitterness of soul" (v. 10), and weeping sore, she lingered in the Temple to pray. Her prayer, v. 11. She prayed in silence, in her heart, v. 13. Eli, sitting by a post of the Temple, observes the violence of her emotions and her lips moving. Too much accustomed in these evil times to see abandoned women about the Temple, he thinks she is drunk and calls out to her in rebuke. It was a smarting blow. Who would be astonished had her grief suddenly changed to indignation and anger? Hard enough to suffer Peninnah's scoffs; but to have insult added to injury —. The meekness of Moses has become a proverb. But did ever man or woman, outside of the Lord Jesus, show a milder, gentler spirit, a finer example of how to suffer wrong, than Hannah when she replied: vv. 15. 16? Touched to the quick with Hannah's grief, Eli answered: v. 17. Matt. 5, 5.

3. Her faith.

Psalm 62, 1. 2. 6—8. Prayer is a resource that never fails. "There is no evil from which it does not offer escape; no sin of which it may not, through the application of Christ's blood, procure the pardon; nor any temptation over which, calling in the aid of the Holy Spirit, it may not achieve a victory. There is no burden too heavy for the back of prayer to carry." (Guthrie.)

Hannah sought her comfort in God's Word and sought God's help in prayer. And she had such faith in God as to believe that God was able to grant her request. She did not say: "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Mark 9, 22. 23. He who helped Hannah to conceive such faith, helped her to conceive a son. She went her way, "and her countenance was no more sad."

There are plenty of people who claim to be philosophers that laugh such trust to scorn. According to them all events follow "the laws of nature." But their god is not our God, nor is "their rock like unto our Rock." Hannah believed not in vain. In due time she came back leading Samuel by the hand to say to the aged priest: vv. 26—28. Her song: 2, 1—10.

4. Her thank-offering.

It may be said of Hannah, too, as of the widow: "She hath given all she had." In that child of her prayer Hannah presented to God a gift more beautiful and costly, more precious by far, than Jacob's tithe of corn and cattle or David's richest spoils of war. She received her boy from God, and to God she gave him in the Temple. — Contrast her with the unhappy partner of Ananias. — No one heard Hannah make her vow. Only she and God knew what her lips had said. But that was enough for Hannah. "Thou, God, seest me."

The only offerings on which our Lord bestowed praise were made by women. One was the widow with her mite. Another one is called "a sinner." Beside them Hannah deserves a prominent place. She gave her costliest possession to God — her son. It was a great sacrifice. She dedicated him to the Lord's service in His Temple. An example which mothers, parents, might well imitate to-day, dedicating their sons to the Christian ministry. To what higher service could he be dedicated? — Hannah said, "I have lent him to the Lord." God paid her good interest for that loan. Matt. 16, 26. She received back all, more than all, she had given away. Prov. 11, 24. 25; Mark 10, 29. 30. G. E. Hageman.

Esther.

Esther 4, 13. 14.

Not all heroism is spectacular. The fireman who rescues the child from the burning house, the officer who leads the charge against the foe, the captain or pilot who is slowly burned to death while he clings to his post and safely brings his passengers to shore, the lifeguard who saves the drowning, these are applauded and heralded as heroes, but —

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

After all, we are not to serve with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but to do all heartily as unto the Lord. What of it, if mortal fools do not acclaim us, — God sees and recognizes His own work in us. Be sure He overlooks and neglects not even a cup of cold water given in His name. What an encouragement that should be to us in His service! Therefore He has also in His holy Book presented to us people who have long since been forgotten by the world, but who will shine forever and through whom we may be blessed even this present hour. Such a one is mentioned here in our text: —

Esther.

1. Her loyalty and faithfulness were severely tested.

A) Esther's story up to the text. The Jews carried away captive, sad conditions. Esther, Mordecai's cousin, becomes queen. Just as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego rose to high positions, although members of a captive nation. Then there arose difficulty between Mordecai and Haman. Haman's intense bitterness (chap. 3, 6) and his plan to destroy the Jews (vv. 8—15). Mordecai's reaction (4, 1—14). What a severe blow! After all, Esther was just a young woman, who had unexpectedly risen to the highest honor and riches, and now she was suddenly confronted, not only with the loss of all she had gained, but even with disgrace and death, just because she belonged to this hated nation, the people of God. May not the thought have come to her to deny her people and to make the most of her personal advantages as the queen, the wife of the king? Indeed, this must have suggested itself to her; for Mordecai, in our text, warns her against such a thought. Esther, moreover, realized that she was now facing a crisis and that she might be hurled from her high pinnacle, the highest that a woman could attain in that country, down to disgrace and death, and all because of her religion. For it was because of their religion that the Jews were doomed. Chap. 3, 8. The Foe hated Israel's Messiah.

B) Other children of God have undergone similar tests and trials. Therefore Peter tells the tried Christians: 1 Pet. 4, 12; 5, 9. Abraham was expected to slay his own son, for whom he had prayed and waited so long. What a severe trial! Moses could have had a brilliant career as a son of Pharaoh's daughter if he had given up his religion and his people. Indeed, power, wealth, inheritance, were his, and all that was offered him for it was a mere *promise,* a mere promise proclaimed, and believed in, by a downtrodden and enslaved people. Thus Daniel was tried. Thus Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Thus the martyrs Polycarp, Perpetua, Hus, the martyrs under Bloody Mary of England, and untold others. Many also whose names ore not mentioned, but whom God knows. Heb. 11, 32—37.

C) Such trials confront us Christians; not all at the same time, not all of equal severity. But Jesus' admonition, "Be thou faithful unto death," shows that there will be trials and difficulties. Mark 8, 34; John 16, 2. Hymn 378, 2. Let us, therefore, watch and pray. "Whosoever shall deny Me before men," etc. Matt. 10, 33. Hymn 381, 1.

2. Esther by faith and loyalty gained a glorious victory.

A) Relate the story of her victory — how she destroyed Haman, the enemy of God and His people, and how the difficulty of the king's decree, which no man might reverse (chap. 8, 8), was overcome. Chap. 8, 9—13. Esther's faith (in essence faith in the Messiah), which God had wrought in her by grace, through His Word spoken by Mordecai, gained the victory. What seemed to be her most severe trial turned out to be her great opportunity.

B) Just so other children of God have won their victory by faith. Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Daniel, Job, Luther, and untold others.

C) When God sends a trial and tests our faith, it is not that He wishes to take anything from us, but He wishes to enrich us. If He takes anything from us, He will give us something better in its place. If He takes a crown from our heads, it is because He wishes to give us a better crown and a better throne. If He takes from us a loved one, it is because He wishes to give them to us that we may have them forever. Phil. 15; Heb. 12, 11. Moses lost Egypt; but even here in this world he gained immeasurably more, and finally he gained heaven itself. Luther lost the favor of the Pope; but who can measure Luther's gain even here and what treasures he gained for all of us? Jas. 1, 2—4. 12. Be sure that the promise of God, even though it consists only of words, is more than heaven and earth, for: Luke 21, 33; Hymn 376, 1. 4; Rom. 8, 35—39; Hymn 273, 3. 4. S.

Elisabeth.

Luke 1, 45.

There have been important epochs in the world's history, but never, since the world began, has there been a period around which gathered such momentous interest, and from which flowed such widespread and far-reaching results, as from that epoch which opens the New Testament, at the entrance to which lived Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Spiritual darkness covered the earth. The once exalted Jewish nation was crushed by a proud foe. (Deut. 29, 29—51.) Four hundred years ago the voice of prophecy had lapsed into silence with the last cry of Malachi (4, 5. 6), and an unbroken night of centuries had brooded over Israel. The mass of the people

were ignorant and corrupt. The majority of the cultivated were either infidels (Sadducees) or hypocrites (Pharisees). Only a few remained true to God, like the venerable Simeon and Anna, who watched and waited for the promised Messiah. But the seventy weeks of Daniel were expiring. God's appointed time was approaching. The redemption was drawing nigh. And out of the twilight of the glorious day which was breaking, Elisabeth and her husband emerge to arrest our attention.

Elisabeth, the Believing Wife and Mother.

1) The beauty of her piety. Descendant of Aaron, the first high priest of the Jews and the brother of Moses and Miriam. We know nothing of her early life. Both she and her husband were "old and stricken in years." They lived at Hebron, about twenty miles from Jerusalem, in the hill country of Judea. How long they were married is not known, but her wedded life had been a happy one; her home was the scene of domestic peace. Of her intellectual character we have enough in the record to show that she must have been a cultivated, intelligent, thoughtful woman. Of her religious character we have abundant evidence. She appears not only as a noble Jewish wife, not only as a high-minded and cultured woman, but as possessing that crowning glory of human character, devoted piety.

And she was blessed with a pious husband. Zacharias was not only her chosen husband, not only a companion, not only the sharer of her social joy, he was more than this. He not only loved her, but he loved her God. He not only ministered to her necessities, fulfilled his duties to her, but he was a servant of the God whom she adored. She felt that their hearts were united not only in love of each other, but also in love of the supreme object. She had the assurance that they not only lived together on earth, but that they would dwell together in heaven. She did not worship alone. Her dearest companion worshiped with her the same true God.

Note the eulogy the Holy Spirit has written on Elisabeth and her husband: "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (This passage offers another outline. 1) Her piety was sincere. She was righteous *before God.* 2) It was practical. She walked *in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.* 3) Her piety was impartial. She walked in *all* the commandments of the Lord. 4) It was irreproachable. She thus walked *blameless.*) "What place on earth so nearly resembles heaven as a home like this, where, superadded to the love of its members to each other, is mutual love to the blessed God; where attention is paid not only to physical and mental duties, but also to the higher duties of religion; where there is not only a family circle and table, but also a family altar; where attention is paid not only to books in general, but where the family Bible is

loved and honored as the Word of God; where not only earthly music is heart, but heavenly hymns are sung, whose sweet notes angels bend to hear and which float to heaven like incense from golden altars; where unions are formed not for this world only, but unions which shall be perpetuated in heaven forever — golden links, which even death's rude hand can sever but for a moment, to be reunited eternally in the home of the blest." (George C. Baldwin, D. D.)

There are many wives and husbands who profess to serve the same God that Elisabeth and her husband did. Can this be said of you? Are you "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"? Have you religion in your families? It is difficult for a wife to serve God if her husband, making the same profession with her, does not join her in that service. It is equally difficult for a husband to grow in grace or to maintain family religion unless his wife cooperates with him. Mutual cooperation is essential to the welfare of the family. The same is true with respect to religion. Christian woman, would you have your husband walk in all the ordinances of the Lord? Walk in them yourself. Christian man, would you have your wife to be a devoted servant of your God? Serve Him yourself. Christian woman, be thou an Elisabeth, and thy husband will far more likely be a Zacharias. Christian man, be thou a Zacharias, and thy wife will far more likely be an Elisabeth.

2) Parents, specially mothers, live in the lives of their children. Only one thing marred the happiness of Elisabeth — she had no children. Relate briefly the events leading up to the birth of John — scene in the Temple, scenes in the home (Zacharias's return, Mary's visit, birth of John, the father's song).

Although nothing more is related of Elisabeth, we know what her subsequent life must have been; for her son's character reflects hers.

A) Humility. — "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit." Luke 1, 80. He grew up under the fostering care of his mother: his Nazarite vow, taught the Law and the prophets. He spent his youth in the wild country of Judea, mountains and desert wastes. When he emerged on his great mission, preaching repentance and baptizing, in time the Messiah asked for baptism too. John: Matt. 3, 14. Words that remind us of Elisabeth's to Mary. Luke 1, 48.

B) Faith and devotedness. — Elisabeth did not, like Sarah, doubt the promise, but believed the promise. And she had fortitude and courage. Is it not said of her son that "he was a bright and shining light"? And he was a preacher of courage and power — his withering rebukes of the hypocritical leaders of the Jews; his scathing denunciation of the loose life of Herod, which cost him his life.

Learn from her example your duty to your children, your privilege, to impress Christian characters upon them early in youth.

O say to mothers what a holy charge is theirs,
With what a queenly power their love
Can rule the fountain of the new-born mind.
Warn them to wake at early dawn to sow
Good seed before the world hath sown her tares
Nor in their toil decline that angel hands
May put their sickles in and reap for God
And gather in His garner.

3) The momentous question that confronts every mother and father: "What manner of child shall this be?" Luke 1, 66. "Every babe is a miracle, and every cradle is a shrine where fears and hopes meet, prayers are offered and questions are asked. It is filled with possibilities for either good or evil. It may hold a monarch or a slave, a benefactor or a criminal, a saint or a demon. The tiny hand in it may come to wield a scepter. The little feet may lead thousands to the dizzy heights of power and influence. The prattling tongue of a little babe may come to inspire millions to do and to dare. The child in the cradle may grow into the very likeness of God, or he may fall to the level of a demon. No mother knows which is to be the case of her darling. An all-wise God has so decreed. But at the cradle every mother hopes. And hope drives out fear." (A. T. Lundholm, D. D.)

Though the angel Gabriel had given them a general outline of the character and mission of the child, there was much he did not tell the parents of John. Elisabeth knew little of the future that awaited her son. She knew not of the murder the malicious Herodias would plot and the licentious Herod, lured by a dancing girl, would perpetrate. Elisabeth knew not that the child in her arms would some day lie in a loathsome criminal's dungeon and that the head pressed to her bosom would be severed by the bloody executioner's ax and presented by a dancing girl to her corrupt mother.

God is merciful. He does not disclose the future of our children to us. In this ignorance of the future what shall we do? Just as Elisabeth did, bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We can set them correct examples in a Christian life; we can teach them the Word of God in the home and see that they get an education under the auspices of the Christian Church. This is more important to-day than ever, in view of the evil influences and tendencies of to-day both in the social and religious world.

"When a son or daughter from a Christian home goes wrong, it is one of the tragedies of life. It almost breaks the hearts of the parents. If it were not for the confidence and hope in the power and goodness of God, the burden would be too heavy to bear. But

Jesus is still seeking that which is lost. And intercessory prayer is a wonderful power to sustain troubled hearts. A saintly pastor had a son whose ungodly life was a burden on the father's heart. One day a friend said: 'Pastor, I know that you tried to teach your son the right way, as the Bible says, Train up a child in the way he should go, and he will not depart from it; but how can it be that you have such an ungodly son?' With a sadness in his voice, which he could not conceal, the pastor answered: 'You are not quoting the Word of God right. It says: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."' (Prov. 22, 6.) Then he added: 'I have not yet given up hope for my son's salvation.' And he did not hope in vain. Four years later his son was converted and became one of the most successful pastors of his day." (A. T. Lundholm, D. D.) Yes, "when he is old." Those words should not be overlooked by grieving parents. G. E. HAGEMAN.

THE BEATITUDES.

The Poor in Spirit.

Matt. 5, 3.

The Sermon on the Mount is justly celebrated. It is one of those parts of the Bible which are often praised even by those who reject most of the Sacred Volume. There issues from it such light that even many unbelievers have been ashamed to say that they could not see its beauty. Indeed, some have gone so far that they have said that the Sermon on the Mount is really all that a man or woman needs of the Bible. But they who say that show that they understand neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the other parts of God's Word. If rightly understood, the Sermon on the Mount will rise in our estimation, not to displace the rest of the Bible, but to throw its light upon all the Sacred Volume and cause us to see in all of it the manifestation of the goodness and righteousness of God, which shall bestow upon us true and indispensable riches for this life and for that which is to come.

And in this celebrated sermon the so-called Beatitudes are justly prized. We see them hanging upon the walls of many homes. If but all understood what they mean to tell us! It was this consideration which moved me to deal with them in a series of sermons.

For this time I have chosen the First Beatitude, as Matthew has recorded it. There Jesus speaks of the *poor in spirit*. Let us speak of them also.

The Poor in Spirit.

1. Who are the poor in spirit?

A) Certainly not the proud and self-confident. The world admires the man who is *rich* in spirit, that is, the man who is proud, optimistic, and self-confident, impatient of restraint and control, a leader and tyrant who bends others to his will; *e. g.,* Lamech; Absalom; the violent Ahab and Jezebel; Pharaoh; Rehoboam. Jas. 4, 13. So Napoleon; Cromwell; the Pope.

B) Jesus rejects such opinions. He pronounces him blessed who is poor in spirit, that is, the one who is distressed and lacks self-confidence and pride in his own accomplishment. That does not mean a man of a craven spirit, who believes that God and the world have treated him unfairly, a misanthrope, a recluse, a hermit, who thinks that God's creation is a mistake.

Jesus means the one who has learned to know his sin and his sinfulness. David (Ps. 51); Paul (chief of sinners); the publican; the penitent who, like the prodigal son, declares: "I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned," etc. Such as find peace, joy, and comfort, not in themselves, but in Jesus, the Friend and Savior of sinners. Hymns 318 and 99; 1 Tim. 1, 15; 1 Cor. 15, 9. 10. Luther's explanation of the Second Article.

C) Not only at the time of his conversion, but throughout his spiritual life such a one is *poor in spirit.* He has no confidence in his *own wisdom,* but he trusts God's Word and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He has no confidence in his *own powers;* he knows there is but one step between him and death, but he lifts up his eyes unto the hills from whence cometh his help. He has no confidence in his *own works,* he knows that in himself there dwelleth no good thing. His hope is built on nothing less than Jesus and His righteousness. He is a man whom Isaiah describes as one that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at the Word of God. Is. 66, 2. Therefore such a one also daily takes refuge in the Word of God. He cannot live without its assurances. He frequently goes to the Lord's Table, for his confession is: "Unless Thy Law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction." Ps. 119, 92. He knows that he is sick, and therefore he daily entrusts himself again to the care of the great Physician.

These are the ones whom Jesus calls *blessed,* and if Jesus calls any one blessed, he is in reality rich and happy.

Are you such a one?

2. Wherein does their blessedness consist?

Text: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

A) They have it now and by faith.

a) They have forgiveness of sin. God Himself assures such a one of the pardon of all his transgressions. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1, 18. What a burden this takes from the heart! David knew what that meant. Ps. 32. With this assurance of pardon, how bright his life! Rom. 8, 33. 34.

b) Since we are God's creatures, there is only one thing in us which God hates — our sin. If that is forgiven, then we are sure of God's love, care, and blessing. And "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8, 31. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. Rom. 8, 28.

Faith is the light in the darkness,
Faith rests on God's promise fair;
For no heart so stout that can do without
The strength of an earnest prayer.
For when man meets with his sorrow
And though he face Satan or death,
Let come what will, he can bear it still,
Supported by Christian faith.

How this kingdom of heaven transforms bitter into sweet, darkness into light, weakness into strength! so that we learn to say with St. Paul: Rom. 8, 35—39 and Rom. 5, 3—5.

c) Through this assurance of God's mercy in Christ, death with its terrors is abolished, and life and immortality is brought to life. 1 Cor. 15, 55—57. Hymn 535.

B) But the kingdom of heaven shall not always be theirs by faith alone, it will finally be theirs in complete, full, and eternal reality. They shall inherit heaven itself and all its glory. Ps. 16, 10. 11; 17, 15; Phil. 3, 21; John 5, 28. 29; Job 19, 25—27; Rom. 8, 18; John 17, 24. Hymn 557, 5. S.

Blessed Mourners.

Matt. 5, 4.

This is one of those texts that seem so paradoxical and self-contradictory that they act like a sharp and quick mental blow. "Blessed are they that mourn," — how can a person be blessed who is full of mourning and gloom? How can a person be happy and at the same time miserable and distressed? Is it not a contradiction in itself: "Blessed are they that mourn"?

The Savior purposely speaks in these strange terms in order to make us think. The truth that He wishes to teach is so important,

and yet men and women are so frivolous that it is difficult to have them dwell upon those things which belong to their peace. Therefore the loving Savior would say something that will stop the foolish playing, dancing, and trifling children of this world in their mad rush towards their own eternal damnation and bring them to realize that their worldly joy is a counterfeit happiness and that they are blind to the true blessedness, which is still within their possibilities.

Even so, some will despise these impressive words, as many have despised them; but let us at least know that also these words are saving words. Jesus is speaking of those who mourn, and of these we wish to speak now. May He, the gracious Savior Himself, "give to His Word impressive power that in our hearts, from this good hour, as fire it may be glowing."

Blessed Mourners.

1. Who are these mourners?

A) Every word of the Scripture must be understood in accordance with its immediate context and also in accordance with its remote context; that is to say, it is to be understood as a part of the entire revelation of God, for God does not in one place contradict what He says in another place. Our Lord's Word is not yea and nay, but yea and amen. Now, the Bible in another place tells us that there is a sorrow of the world which worketh death. 2 Cor. 7, 10. These unbelieving, faithless, and disappointed persons, who are in despair because they cannot live their life of sin and laziness as they would, are accursed of God. They are not meant here when it says, "Blessed are they that mourn." Their sorrow is a foretaste of eternal woe. Such were Cain, Saul, Judas.

B) Jesus is speaking of that mourning and sorrow of which St. Paul says that it is "not to be repented of." He is speaking of that weeping of which the Lord Jesus said in another place: "Ye shall weep and lament, and the world shall rejoice; . . . but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." John 16, 20. 22. He is speaking especially of those who mourn because of the sin of this world and, above all things, because of their own sin. Such a distressed person was the prodigal son. Such a mourner was Peter when he wept over his sins; Paul, when he called himself the "chief of sinners." Manasseh. 2 Chron. 33, 12. 13. Such a mourner is every Christian who mourns because of his sin. Such Christians cry to God day and night for forgiveness, for help. By daily contrition and repentance they crucify their Old Adam and drown him with all his lusts. These are the mourners of whom the Lord speaks here in this place. Such a one was St. Paul. Rom. 7, 24. This is a mourning and a sadness which God wants to see in us, which must go with us as long as we live on this earth.

The beginning of Luther's Ninety-five Theses. We express it every day when we say: "Forgive us our trespasses"; "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Are you such a mourner? Is that your daily prayer: —

O that the Lord would guide my ways
To keep His statutes still!
O that my God would grant me grace
To know and do His will?

But how can these people be called blessed if they mourn and are distressed? Our Lord tells us here in the second part of this text. Of that we shall now speak, of the blessing which these mourners possess.

2. Wherein consists their blessedness?

"Blessed," says He, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Oh, that is blessed mourning, for which there is a real, genuine comfort!

A) There is mourning and sadness for which there is no comfort. There is a hunger of which men perish, but there is a healthy hunger, which whets the appetite for wholesome food. So it is in this spiritual matter, there is a mourning as that of Dives in hell, Pharaoh in the midst of the Red Sea, and Prov. 1, 24—33. Many of those who are now laughing, who seem so happy, gay, and trifling, will finally be in that place of horrors "where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh." They will be thirsting for comfort, but they will be told: "Thou art tormented."

B) But for this mourning because of our sin and because of our transgressions and because of our imperfect obedience, there is rich comfort.

a) There is the rich comfort that the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1, 7; Is. 1, 18. 19; 41; John 3, 16. Hymn 322, 1.

b) The comfort of God's invitation. Matt. 11, 28; 2 Pet. 3, 9; 1 Tim. 2, 4.

c) The pleadings of our heavenly Intercessor. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Thus Adam and Eve were comforted when they were distressed because of the loss of Paradise. Gen. 3, 15. Thus God restored His Holy Spirit and the joy of His salvation to David. Ps. 51. Thus the prodigal son was comforted at his father's bosom when his father gave to him shoes for his feet, a ring on his finger, and made for him a feast. Luke 15. Thus Paul was comforted when he could say about himself: 1 Tim. 1, 15. 16. Thus every Christian is comforted when he confesses his sin. Baptism. Lord's Supper. The Gospel. God's many promises to His children. Is. 40, 11; Ps. 23; John 14. No one can truly enjoy this comfort

except they who mourn. Only the Christians who mourn as God would have us mourn are truly happy, as God would have us happy and blessed at Christmas-time and at Easter-time, in life and in death.

d) And then, how richly will they be comforted in heaven! Rev. 7, 9—17. "I would not live alway," etc. Hymn 535. S.

The Meek.

Matt. 5, 5.

However well educated and experienced a person may be, if the light of the Bible does not enlighten his mind and correct his foolish notions, the most acute thinker and brainy man of culture will sink deeper and deeper into all manner of follies. That will happen to him which, according to the Bible, happens to those who wish to be wise while they despise God's wisdom: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Rom. 1, 22. It is one of the characteristics of carnal, sinful, bragging knowledge that it is superficial and makes a great show, but is in reality foolishness. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. 1, 25. When God speaks, even though His words at first appear to the carnal mind to be mere foolishness, the highest and purest wisdom speaks to us. This is true and very evident also in the text which we are to consider now. It speaks of the meek of this earth and calls them blessed. We are fully aware of the fact that the world's wisdom condemns this sentiment. But let us not allow the empty voice of mere assertion to bias our judgment; let us rather listen to what Jesus points to in our text.

The Meek.

1. Who are these meek people?

a) You will not find them among the aggressive world-conquerors, whose praises the world loves to extol. The great Alexander, and the brilliant Julius Caesar, and the fierce Duke of Alva, and the cruel King Philip of the Invincible Armada are not among them. But do not the poets of the world sing the praises of just such men as these? Do not the historians devote their volumes to these ruthless warriors and fighters? Have not our painters delighted to delineate just such heroes of war upon their canvases, showing us the men of battle, slaying their fellow-men and riding recklessly over the dead and wounded, sacking towns and burning villages? Are not our libraries full of such stories? Do not our art galleries tell of the exploits of the warrior?

But who praises the meek, the peaceful, those who suffer in silence? If the world takes any notice of these people at all, it points

at them the finger of shame and calls them cowards and fools, or it may shrug its shoulders and intimate that they are dastards, weak in body and mind.

But do you not see the folly of the world? It crucifies its best Friend and Savior, but it lifts up, and sings the praises of, the tyrant who smites it on the face and exalts himself. The world turns its back upon the gentle Shepherd and therefore falls a prey to the cruel and murderous ones whom it has highly praised. How true it is: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"!

But yet we have not answered our question. Who are these meek? Not from our text, but from other parts of the Bible we have a full description of these people.

b) They are those who from God's Word have learned the power and majesty of the Almighty and their own weakness. They know that with God nothing shall be impossible, and they know that they themselves cannot even turn one hair white or black. In their hearts constantly resounds the refrain: "I am weak, but Thou art mighty."

But their meekness is increased also by the knowledge of their transgressions and sins. These meek do not only know that they are mere dust and ashes, but they also know that through their disobedience they have deserved God's wrath and punishment. They are fully conscious of the fact that, if they were to receive what they deserve, suffering and distress, woe and misery, here and hereafter, would be their portion forever. They join Ezra in saying: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Ezra 9, 6. See the publican enter the Temple and strike his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"; see Peter ashamed of his disloyalty and sin, going out and weeping bitterly; hear Paul accusing himself of being the chief of sinners; hear David moaning because of his inquity and praying God to be washed from it — these are the meek.

c) And yet they do not despair. There is not that proud stubbornness of Cain, who said: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Gen. 4, 13. It is not the despair, cowardice, and pride of Judas and Saul, who thought that they could help themselves by destroying their own lives. No, these meek have learned from the Word of God a great and wonderful secret — the mercy, grace, and love of God toward the fallen sinner. John 3, 16. Although they say in their meekness: "Nothing in my hand I bring," yet with childlike confidence they add: "Simply to Thy cross I cling." They know their own uncleanness, but they also know that fountain filled with blood. Manasseh had once been a bold sinner, but after God had humbled him and then granted him cleansing from all his blood-guiltiness, Manasseh became meek and "humbled himself greatly before the God

of his fathers and prayed unto Him; and He was intreated of him and heard his supplication. . . . Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God." 2 Chron. 33, 12. 13. Admiration and gratitude for God's unspeakable gift cause such a meek one to join David in saying: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?"

d) Such a meek one is glad to serve the Lord in any place. He is thankful that he may labor in the Lord's vineyard; his heart is filled with that beautiful sentiment expressed by the psalmist: "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Ps. 84, 10. They demand no leadership for themselves, they demand no reward. Whatever work, whatever place God gives them, they are thankful for that, and if God blesses them in their labors, blesses their weak efforts, they are thankful for that, they know that they have not deserved it; rather, that they have deserved nothing but punishment. Such a meek one will not follow Nebuchadnezzar, etc. Dan. 4, 30. The meek one will say to God in the words of the returning prodigal: "I am not worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants."

e) Therefore, if God sends the meek sorrow or a cross or chastises them, they are still meek in their tribulation. They know that by their sin they have deserved much worse. When the dark day comes for them, therefore, they say with Job: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job 2, 10.

f) They are meek when they are persecuted and insulted, for they remember the fearful debt which God has forgiven them. They remember that Jesus upon the cross prayed also for His crucifiers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Stephen prayed: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 7, 60. Daily, therefore, they pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

g) Just this drives these meek children of God to the house of God, there to implore God's forgiveness, there to be assured of God's mercy, there to receive His blessed Sacrament, in which God gives them the body and blood of Jesus Christ as a pledge of His continued favor and grace.

Such are the meek of whom the text speaks. They are repentant sinners, who rejoice in God's mercy alone and daily seek help at the throne of God's grace.

Are you one of these? Are you meek towards God — meek in all your service, meek in bearing the cross, meek towards your sinning, erring fellow-Christians, meek under persecution? Does the new man daily arise and live before God in you? Do you crush the pride,

self-glorification, cruelty, and revenge that daily arises in your heart? Are you meek because you notice how difficult it is to be and remain meek?

2. What are the blessings of these meek? What are their joys? Wherein do the riches, the happiness, the power, and glory belonging to these meek consist?

a) Our text tells us: They shall inherit the earth. Yes, strange as it may seem, God, the infallible God, tells us here that He, with all His omnipotence, which no one can controvert, will see to it that the meek inherit the earth. He is not saying that they will inherit heaven, but he mentions the earth, this earth that we see about us. The gold in its mines, the wealth of its plains, the glory of its mountains, and all else that you may mention, beauty, intelligence, health, whatever is worth anything on this earth, it is going to belong to the meek. They shall inherit the earth. Who? Those meek whom we have described? Who says that they are going to inherit the earth? Where is that man of power, that czar, or king, or president, or governor, or prince, who can say to whom this earth is to belong? Here He is in our text. It is the One who said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28, 18. He insists — and no one will dare to open his mouth against Him — that the meek shall inherit the earth. Not the proud, not the revengeful, not the spiteful, not those inconsiderate, ruthless world-conquerors, who devastated lands and fields, burned cities, killed their fellow-men in order to enrich themselves, but the meek, suffering, humble, self-sacrificing Christian, — he is going to inherit the earth. That is to be his blessing, his riches, and his happiness.

b) But, after all, we do not see the meek inheriting the earth. We see them frequently depressed and rejected of men, crushed and pushed aside by their selfish and inconsiderate oppressors. But be not deceived by appearances. You may see a child weeping because it is being washed, combed, and dressed by a nurse. The nurse seems to be in control and happy, the child seems to be a slave and miserable, and yet the mother and father and many others know that the child is the one who is really the fortunate one and that the poor nurse is the servant of the child. That is a weak picture of what is going on on this earth between the proud, selfish robbers and the meek Christian. After all, the Christian is the one, therefore, who can truthfully say: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. . . . Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Ps. 23. He is the one who can say: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8, 31. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8, 28. Let the appearance be what it will, this whole earth with all its governments, no matter how desperate things may seem, this whole earth, with all its riches, is in the hands of Him

to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, and He is daily, hourly, and every minute seeing to it that all things must work together for good to the meek, — therefore the meek shall inherit the earth.

This earth is a great running machinery, and there is going to be an output. The wheels are swinging, the shafts are moving, one shaft is lifted, another is dropped, chips are flying, there is a joining, and there is a separating, there are strange noises, earthquakes and cyclones, whirlpools and shipwreck, wars and calamity, and none of us know what is going to happen to-morrow, neither you nor I am managing this earth. There is a great Power above, and He has told us that, when He is through with this world and its machinery is stopped forever, the output will belong to the Christian — *the meek shall inherit the earth.*

c) And though the meek are not in high honors and glory, yet right now and here they have God's promises, God's assurances, by which they are wonderfully supported. Through the Gospel, God forgives them richly and daily all their sins, in the Sacrament He again and again gives them His very body and blood as a pledge of this pardon. From God's Word they receive guidance and instruction in every doubt and emergency of life; in every trial, tribulation, or sorrow they have the wonderful support of God's most precious comfort.

d) And right here and now they have the constant looking forward to, and hope of, that fulness of joy and those pleasures forevermore of which the Bible speaks so frequently, Ps. 16, 11; that inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven, 1 Pet. 1, 4; for although heaven is not mentioned here in this place, heaven is assured to these meek in many other places of the Scripture. And not only their souls, but also their bodies will inherit eternal life. That glory to come is so great that those who view it aright are willing to give and to sacrifice everything for it. Phil. 3, 8. 13. 14. There are so many delusive, false hopes filling the hearts of people about us. How many millions hope to become rich in this world and must finally eat the dry ashes of disappointment! Is it not true that, no matter what you want on this earth, even though you obtain it, you must finally surrender it? But we are given the promise of something lasting and enduring. Oh, what blessed, rich, and happy people are the meek, who have such an outlook — pleasures *forevermore!* 2 Cor. 6, 8—10; Ps. 91.

To-day you are offered this happiness. Come, then, into the company of these blessed, acknowledge your transgressions of which your conscience accuses you, cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and look to the Savior, look to the cross. 1 Cor. 1, 18.

S.

Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness.

Matt. 5, 6.

The world to-day is cursed with selfishness, greed, and cruelty. Oppression and injustice are manifested in every department of life and in all parts of the world. At times there is a respectable cloak covering the sores of human society, but every now and then this cloak is removed. It was removed with violence during the last war, and the heart of man was shown to be just that which God has painted it, namely, a cesspool of all iniquity, the nest out of which continually are hatched evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. And all this suffering has taught the world nothing. The world has complained and howled, has spoken and written, and a thousand nostrums have been offered; but the great multitudes are still on the road to more and even greater disaster. How is it to be with us, and are we to go with the world and be condemned with the world and be lost, or shall we pay attention to the words of our Savior, through which millions have been saved and through which we are to be saved? Let us give attention to them and learn what the blessed Master Himself from heaven teaches us for our temporal and eternal welfare. Just as an earthly physician, when examining a patient and finding him to have a perverted appetite or a lack of appetite, will give him something to create the proper appetite, the proper hunger and thirst, so Jesus here recommends to us the proper spiritual hunger and thirst, the proper, saving appetite of the soul. That shall be our theme: —

The Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness.

1. How is it engendered?

A) This hunger and thirst is not in us *by nature.* By nature we are Mammon servants, 1 Tim. 6, 6, Pharisees, tyrants; we love honor among men, John 5, 44, the most learned and intelligent of us are superstitious, Acts 17, 2. 2; even those who seem to follow Christ often seek the loaves and fishes, John 6, 26.

That is the hunger and thirst which lives in us by nature and well-nigh drives us mad. Matt. 6, 32.

B) If we are to have the proper appetite, hunger and thirst, created in us, we must first of all come to see the sinfulness, the wickedness and the folly of those cravings, those longings, those wishes which live in our hearts by nature. It was because Satan succeeded in instilling such hunger and thirst into the heart of Eve that she desired to eat of the forbidden fruit and thought that it was a fruit to be desired to make one wise. It is because of this sin that the curse has come upon us. — As long as this hunger and thirst rules us and drives us, so long the curse will rest upon us. We can never be blessed through these desires nor through satisfying

these desires. Six thousand years of history are a demonstration that this hunger and thirst, this craving, is the curse of the world, which has brought untold suffering upon it. Moreover, the infallible Word of God teaches that very thing. Christ has come, not only to show us another hunger and thirst, but to create it within us, namely, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Of that He spoke to that woman at Jacob's Well. John 4. Of that He spoke in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 33.

How is this hunger and thirst after righteousness created in us? Just as much of the hunger and thirst is created, namely, by looking at that which we are to desire. Look away, therefore, look away from the forbidden fruit to which the devil is pointing; look away from the glittering baubles and from the earthly, temporal rewards after which the world is running and look at true righteousness. God has shown it to you in all its luster and grandeur, in all its beauty, purity, and glory, when he sent His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ into the world. In Jesus all the world was to behold righteousness, holiness, purity, and wisdom personified. We may point to this Jesus and say, Righteousness was made flesh; Wisdom was made flesh; Holiness was made flesh; Purity, Justice, Goodness, and Love were made flesh in Him; for in Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Look to Him as He fulfilled all righteousness, and then compare your own sinful, selfish, impure, loveless life with His. Do you not see the difference? Do you not see the black, filthy life that is yours and the pure life that is His? That is to arouse in you the hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is to cause you to groan, O wretched man that I am; how sinful I am, how far from what I ought to be! And learning from God's Word that Jesus can supply the Water of Life, you are to seek it from Him, that is, you are to ask that pardon and cleansing from sin which He alone can give. You are to pray with longing hearts: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." You are to pray: "Wash me from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." You are to long for and pray: O Lord, take away my guilt and give me Thy innocence, take away my impurity and give me Thy purity, take away my unrighteousness and give me Thy righteousness.

But you are also to long for the power to lead such a life as you have learned to admire in the Lord Jesus. You are therefore also to pray: O Lord, strengthen Thy weak servant. Help me to stand against the wiles of the devil, create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. If this hunger and thirst actually lives in your heart, you will go daily to the fountain where righteousness is given you, namely, to God's Word; you

will be a frequent visitor at the altar of the Lord, where you are given the assurance that your guilt was taken away by the Lamb of God, Jesus, and where the very body and blood of Christ is given you, with the assurance that this body was given for you and this blood was shed for you. You will not only love to sing with God's people: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee," but you will also sing: "I long to be like Jesus, Meek, loving, lowly, mild." Behold, thus is created in us this hunger and thirst for righteousness. Thus is displaced and driven out the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. That is the hunger and thirst which we see in those people of God who wish that they had a thousand voices in order to praise God for this very pardoning righteousness and sanctifying righteousness which Jesus alone can give. That was the hunger and thirst which moved Luther to feed his soul upon the body and blood of Christ and to call all the world to this feast, away from the husks that the swine do eat, the foolish superstitions and vanities of false religions of the world.

Does this hunger and thirst live in you? What is it that drives you daily on? What are the chief questions of your life? Are they, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Are you hungering and thirsting for the loaves and the fishes? Are you still asking, Who shall be greatest in the kingdom of God? Or has this hunger and thirst after righteousness, pardon of sin, and true godliness begun at least to grow in your hearts? If it has, you belong to those blessed people of whom the text speaks.

2. But wherein consists their blessedness? What blessedness are they assured of? Our text tells us: "They shall be filled." You shall be filled with this righteousness.

A) With the righteousness of justification. Christ's righteousness shall be given you. You will be assured by God Himself that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law." Gal. 4, 4. 5. Your sin and iniquity shall be washed away, washed away through the blood of Christ. 1 John 1, 7. 9. And you will be able to say: "Now I have found the sure foundation, Where evermore my anchor grounds!" You will belong to that great company who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev. 7, 14. You will never go to God's Word in vain, for there is His word of reconciliation, there is God's own pardon for sin. You will never visit the altar of the Lord in vain, for there you will always hear: "Be of good cheer, My son, My daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee." God's own absolution shall be granted you daily and richly for all your sins through the mouth of His own servant and minister. "And though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 1, 18. And though you have been as sinful as that

Samaritan woman or Mary Magdalene; though seven devils lived within you; though your transgressions be such as David's; and though you be the chief of sinners, as Paul was, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus shall remove every blot from you and make you pure and holy in God's sight.

B) Not only will you be made holy by pardon and forgiveness, but the Holy Spirit will at the same time begin to work in your heart, transforming, regenerating, and changing you from a slave of sin and Satan into a child of God, filled with holy desires, active in holy and righteous work, leading you to walk in true godliness and purity. True it is, this walk in righteousness will not become perfect here in this world. Your sinful nature will still cause you to make some missteps and sidesteps, and yet daily you will follow after righteousness and true godliness, knowing from God's Word that He will certainly give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. And as you earnestly covet the best gifts, He will bestow them upon you through His Word and Sacrament. He will grant you strength to stand against the wiles of the devil, He will strengthen your faith, increase your hope, and move you to works and words that are well-pleasing in His sight. You shall be filled with righteousness.

Finally, in heaven you shall awake in God's likeness. Ps. 17, 15. O how blessed are they who are looking forward to the time when the struggle against sin will be over and the perfect image of God, perfect righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, will again be ours. Let that longing and that desire ever dwell in your heart to reach that place where even our vile bodies will be changed like unto Christ's glorious body and where our souls and hearts will be filled with light and purity. O sing it and pray it: "The Homeland! O the Homeland!" Hymn 562, 1. 2. Text. S.

The Merciful Heart.

Matt. 5, 7.

The most beautiful hymn upon charity, or love, is found 1 Cor. 13. Multitudes, when they read this chapter, are filled with admiration for its matchless beauty. It has been called the "Song of Songs upon Divine Love." And one reason why men continue to admire it is because the man who composed it was himself a man of love, of charity, and of mercy. It was St. Paul, the apostles to the Gentiles.

But Paul had not always been such a man of mercy and charity. At one time he was a very, very cruel persecutor of godly men and women. At one time he had been a bloodthirsty, cruel monster, whose delight it was to hale men and women into court and have them thrown into prison. Aye, he assisted in having them stoned to death for no greater offense than that they prayed to God in the

name of Jesus Christ. But a great change came upon this cruel and bloodthirsty man. This vindictive, bitter hatred was taken from his heart, and he was made a loving, merciful, and charitable disciple of the Lord Jesus. What was it that caused this change in this man? That which changed the cruel persecutor into a merciful, loving, and kind friend, brother, and helper is contained right here in our text. Indeed the truth contained in our text has not only wrought this change in St. Paul, it has done this for millions of others. This truth of our text has done more than anything else to take from this world its cruelty, hatred, vindictiveness, and to supply in its stead love, charity, and kindness. Surely, this text is worth dwelling upon. It tells us of —

The Merciful Heart.

Let us ask: —

1. How does mercy enter the human heart?

A) It is not there by nature. By nature man is cruel, vindictive, selfish, loveless. Man does not only become more hard-hearted, cold-hearted, and wicked as he goes along, he is so even from his birth. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. 8, 21. This detestable sin lives in the heart even of the youngest child. Who has not seen it crop out in small children? Have we not noticed that they frequently enjoy giving pain to others, even to their parents, sisters, and brothers?

And these children, as they grow up, become worse and worse, their hearts become colder and harder. There is much prating in this world about charity, but in reality you can scarcely give your fellow-men greater sorrow than by telling them about the blessings which you enjoy. It is true, after men have made others poor, after they have others at their mercy, then they also wish to hide their sin and to appear very charitable and merciful by giving those poor beggars of their own making a few crumbs from their table. In this way they hope to be admired not only as powerful, successful, and brainy men, shrewd and bold, but also as charitable and gracious and merciful. It is so to-day. It was thus in the days of Jesus. Why should I continue to speak about this? You all know that if a man or woman becomes guilty of some action which the world also considers disgraceful, the world will never forgive them, but delights in pointing its finger at them as long as they live. And worse still, those who actually sacrificed themselves for the world have been stoned, imprisoned, and crucified. Thus is the heart by nature.

B) But there is a cure for this cruelty, this cold-heartedness. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." Our empty, cold, and loveless hearts must be brought to that fountain of mercy and love which flowed in the heart of the Lord Jesus, which shone from the heart of the heavenly Father when He "so loved the

world that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. When we hear this Gospel that Jesus died for us on the cross, that the Father sacrificed the best and highest that He had, His Son, for us and when, through this Gospel, faith in God's love and mercy is engendered in our hearts, then, with this faith, there enters also charity and mercy. That is the only fountain from which we can draw mercy and charity. That is the only fire of affection at which we may warm our cold hearts. That is the only material upon which our starved natures can be fed and by which they can be given life, the life of charity and mercy. It is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It was this that changed Paul's heart. It is this that makes men charitable and merciful. There is no other source. Even many societies and lodges that claim to be benevolent organizations have this rule, that those who are in dire need are to be excluded from membership. Oh, how blind are they who cannot see that such societies, far from being benevolent, are rather agencies which foster selfishness, hypocrisy, and counterfeit charity and mercy in the world! No, there is but one source of mercy — the love of Jesus Christ revealed in the Gospel.

And our hearts, my dear hearers, because of the Old Adam still clinging to us, are just as evil and bad as the hearts of others. Our sinful heart is inclined even to rejoice in the misfortune of others and to feel distressed to hear of the good fortune of your neighbors.

Oh, let us repent of this shameful sin, let us acknowledge it to God, and let us rejoice that Christ has died for this very lack of mercy, lack of love, lack of generosity, on our part, and let us pray God that with faith in His mercy He may create also in our hearts true mercy and charity. He will do this. In the Christian there is at least the beginning of imitating God's mercy. The Christian can now pray: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Yes, the very prayer in which we ask for mercy teaches us also to render the deeds of mercy. May God increase our faith in His mercy and thus make our hearts ever more merciful! For then shall we be truly blessed. Our text speaks also of this blessedness.

2. Wherein consists the blessing of such merciful hearts?

A) Text: "They shall obtain mercy." But how is this? If they are merciful, are they, then, not as God would have them be? Why need they then obtain mercy? Remember, although they have obtained forgiveness and kindness has actually begun to take root in their hearts, yet this renewal within them, this new growth of love and charity, is still imperfect and insufficient. The best of these merciful Christians must say: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Therefore they are still daily in need of mercy and forgiveness.

And that is their blessing — they daily and richly obtain mercy. For all his shortcomings, defects, and sins, whether committed by

word, thought, or action, whether sins of commission or omission, the Christian obtains and has forgiveness. Third Article. God deals with such according to His grace and not according to justice. They are in His Kingdom of Grace. With them God deals as a loving Father. The weaker and more wretched one of these children is, the greater is the love, attention, mercy, and good will which the Father bestows upon it. These Christians, these children of God, wish to live upon the mercy of God; they do not daily ask for their desert and merit; they daily ask that God should be gracious to them; they daily cry unto God: "God be merciful to me, a sinner"; their daily prayer is, "Forgive us our trespasses," etc. And God's daily word is to them, "My son, My daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Oh, what blessed people they are! "They shall obtain mercy." Without this mercy, this daily forgiveness, there could be no real peace between them and God, but now through this mercy there is daily, genuine, true peace in their hearts with God, their Father. However distressed they may be because of their many sins, they can sing: —

Chief of sinners though I be,
Jesus shed His blood for me.

B) And if God is so merciful to forgive them, will He not be merciful to them also in their earthly concerns? If that pure and holy God who hates sin above all things daily and richly forgives them all shortcomings, will He not also grant them that other mercy, to lead and guide them, deliver them from all evil, shield and guard them against all dangers?

Whatever may trouble them, sickness, foes, slander, enmity, hatred, and persecution, and though the cross be ever so heavy and the misfortunes appear ever so cruel, *they shall obtain mercy,* their faith in their eternal inheritance will be guarded, they will be led, not according to their own counsel, but according to God's wondrous, loving, merciful counsel, and they will finally be received into glory. (Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul.)

Oh, how blessed beyond all expression, blessed beyond all other people, are they who know that they shall obtain mercy! When they ask for forgiveness of sin, *they shall obtain mercy;* when they ask to be preserved from temptation, *they shall obtain mercy;* when in distress they ask for their daily bread, *they shall obtain mercy;* when they ask to be protected from the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh, *they shall obtain mercy;* when in the hour of death they ask God to receive them mercifully for Jesus' sake, *they shall obtain mercy;* and finally God will mercifully grant them heaven, its glory, and everlasting life throughout all eternity. Can there be greater blessings than these? Blessed are they throughout all eternity. These people will praise and glorify God, not because He dealt justly with them, but because they obtained mercy. Hymn 312, 1. 2. S.

Purity of Heart.

Matt. 5, 8.

It ought to be evident to all that in our text the word "heart" does not refer to that physical organ in us which pushes the blood through our bodies. When David prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God," he was referring to his thoughts and emotions. And here in our text, when the Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart," He also means this inner life. Likewise in Ps. 147, 3; Is. 61, 1; Ps. 19, 8. In all these passages, and in many others, "heart" refers to the inner thoughts and emotions, our innermost spiritual being. Of this heart our text speaks. Of this Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Let us dwell upon these words and consider their meaning. We shall learn to grasp the exact meaning of our Lord if we now speak of —

Purity of Heart.

1. How is it obtained?

A) When we ask the question, How may we obtain purity of heart? we admit that we have not this purity of heart. If we had purity of heart, there would be no question about obtaining it. That is the first truth to be learned and remembered and kept in mind if we are to understand this passage of the Bible correctly. The heart of man is *impure,* all hearts are polluted. Our hearts are by nature filled with all manner of sins, follies, errors, and wicked desires and lusts. If any one denies that his heart is unclean, it is a sign that he is so steeped in filth and impurity that he does not recognize the darkness and impurity of his own heart. There are millions who are filled with covetousness, who are discontented with their own lot in life, rebellious against God's ways, and filled with the lust for other people's possessions, who do not even realize that the utmost filth of hell is filling and polluting their hearts. There is hatred, bitterness, and an unforgiving spirit eating into the very vitals of many, and all the while they are imagining that their hearts are good and holy, sound and clean. Experience and their own conscience seem to teach these people nothing. But though they deceive themselves and try to deceive others, God has revealed the truth. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and: "Out of the heart" [that is, out of your heart and my heart and every man's heart] "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries," etc. Matt. 15, 19. St. Paul himself, one of the best men who ever lived, said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. 7, 18. And God declares authoritatively: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. 8, 21. Thousands of years ago God asked all men: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Prov. 20, 9.

The unbelievers are so deeply steeped in this filth and uncleanness that the Bible says of them: "They are dead in trespasses and sins," and paints their degradation and inner spiritual impurity in such powerful and lurid colors as these: Rom. 1, 29—32; Eph. 2, 2. 3.

And even we Christians, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells, aye, in whose spirit the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost have made their abode, who are continually surrounded by the holy angels, — even our hearts are not free from the impurities of sin. Indeed, the very best and holiest of men and women have been those who have seen the filth of their own hearts, have been distressed and pained thereby, so that they cried out with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

B) It is therefore an important question to ask: How shall this purity of which the text speaks be obtained? And we need not go about making efforts to invent our own conjectures. He has said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "There is a fountain filled with blood," etc. It required the crimson blood of the Son of God. "To Him give all the prophets witness that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10, 43. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name," etc. Acts 4, 12. Christ burdened Himself with our guilt, suffered and died for it, and the fruits of His suffering and death are now offered to us in His Word and Gospel. Whenever you hear that Jesus died for you and for your sins, whenever you read it, whenever you think of it with a repentant and believing heart (Acts 15, 9), God cleanses you from your sin, God gives you purity of heart. When Jesus suffered, died, and shed His blood, He prepared the cleansing, and whenever we are told of this shedding of His blood, we are by faith in that sacrifice of Christ actually cleansed from our sin. We are then made pure in heart, first of all by forgiveness. That is the only genuine, perfect purity which we can have as long as we are here on this earth. And if we are clean in God's sight, who dares to call us unclean? By the Gospel, therefore, by the precious Word of God, the sweet assurance of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, this purity of heart is obtained. All those who wish to obtain it in some other way, through their own works, their own efforts, are only besmirching themselves so much the more, because there can be no greater uncleanness than contempt for what Jesus has done for us. Just so, all those who imagine that He has only and simply enabled us to clean ourselves are bringing contempt and shame upon the work of Christ and are thus rendering themselves more and more filthy in God's sight. No, there is only one way to obtain purity of heart, that is, to accept by faith the sentence of God, that for Jesus' sake He considers us pure and clean. "Just as I am, without one plea," etc.

C) And by this same faith the Holy Spirit of purity enters our hearts (Gal. 3, 2) and gives us pure and holy thoughts and emotions.

The filth of sin is cast out more and more, and our hearts are made holy temples, set apart for holy and pure desires. Clean thoughts, pleasing to God, the love of God, devotion to His service, love towards our neighbor, even a forgiving spirit towards our enemies, love for God's Word, reverence for that which is holy, devotion to duty, honesty and uprightness, all these beautiful, clean virtues begin to thrive, and their opposites, the unclean fruits of the flesh, will be repressed more and more. David. Manasseh. Paul. Mary Magdalene. St. Augustine. True, this our own purity is imperfect as long as we dwell upon earth, but it is the only real human purity of heart that is found on this earth. And that carries with it the greatest of blessings.

2. Which are these blessings? "They shall see God."

A) Such as accept this purity of heart from God's pardoning hand and in whose heart the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of purity, dwells, *shall see God* in the Gospel as a merciful Lord, who is gracious to them and has chosen them. *They shall see God* as He is: Love itself. As long as we live on this earth, we cannot see God in a more beautiful vision than we see Him in the Gospel of His forgiving grace. We see Jesus in His Word, and Jesus tells us: "He that seeth Me seeth the Father."

B) And joined with this sight of God in His mercy, the pure in heart see God also in His majesty in creation (Ps. 19), in His providence, Gen. 50, 20; Ps. 73; 37, 23. Moses. Joash. In history (Reformation). What visions! 2 Kings 6, 15—17.

C) But though this blessing of seeing God by faith is so great that it has set all Christendom a-singing: "O that I had a thousand voices," etc., yet it is not all; there is even greater happiness, riches, and blessings in store for those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God also, after their resurrection, face to face. Job 19, 25—27. In heaven, with these very eyes, we shall live and dwell in His company, we shall see His image in our fellow-Christians, and we shall see Him Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in glory and in power and in majesty; our "eyes shall behold Him and not another." 1 Cor. 13, 12.

Shall such people be called blessed? They are a thousand times blessed. They are blessed here in time; every day of their life here on earth is a blessed day; every waking moment, no matter what their troubles and sorrows may be, is a moment of blessedness; and when they leave this world of blessings, they come to the world of greater blessings, not for a moment, not for a year, they are perfectly blessed, they are at His right hand, they shall have fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore. No wonder they sing: "I would not live alway," etc.

Through these words of our text, God has again opened to you the greatest opportunity of your life. Are you going to pass it by and go to the beggarly elements of this world? Are you going where the swine wallow in the mire and think to find blessedness and happiness there, or are you going to enter with the children of God and have God make you one of the pure in heart by forgiveness and by sanctification, so that you may look forward to the unspeakable blessings that God has in store for you? Let neither pride nor discouragement keep you without. S.

The Blessed Peacemakers.

Matt. 5, 9.

You have all seen the picture of a soldier, perhaps of a dashing officer or general, on horseback. Some of the most beautiful paintings depict the march or the fight of armies. You have all heard martial music, the blare of the trumpet, the roll of the drum. Oh, how it stirs the hearts and the minds of the people to see a regiment march, to hear the sharp command of the officer and the thrilling music of the band! Who has not read of battles? Whose heart has not been stirred by such poetry as the "Star-spangled Banner"? — And yet all these things that I have mentioned point to the depravity, the sinfulness, the shame, and the corruption of man. They ought to fill us with sadness and shame, especially when we remember that battle-cries and martial music and bloody strife do not take place among savages only, but that nations of highest enlightenment, of most advanced culture, who are at the very head in modern progress, are the ones who use all their equipment and scientific accomplishment in order to starve one another, in order to kill and slaughter one another. Oh, methinks that, if men thought rightly upon these things, the sight of a soldier, the hearing of martial music, the very reminder that there must be armies of men, would cause them to fall upon the ground in the dust and to cry out: "O God, be merciful to us murderous wretches!" — Oh, this world needs the words of our text, we need them! Here is a different spirit, this text is not full of this selfish, murderous spirit of man. Here is the Spirit from heaven, from God Himself, and this Spirit saith: "Blessed are the peacemakers," — not the fighters, — "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." These words are the words which this world ought to study and the spirit of which they ought to imbibe. Let us to-day make a beginning and think upon these words and speak of them, and let us pray God that He may fill us with the sentiment that He has expressed in this text, and that He may make and keep us peacemakers, children of God.

The Blessed Peacemakers.

1. Whom does Jesus mean by peacemakers?

In order to answer this question we must remember that there can be no peacemaker unless the peace has been broken. But we all know very well that there is much enmity and strife among men. Even in those days which are called times of peace, there is strife in the business world, in families, courts, etc. We have our police force walking our streets, armed, not against wild beasts, but against men, to keep men from breaking the peace. No one understands these conditions properly unless he probes down deeply into the affairs of men and finds this to be at the bottom of all enmity on this earth: *man has broken the peace with His Creator.* That is the source of all strife among men. In Paradise all was peace and happiness. Then came the accursed peacebreaker, the devil, and ever since then there has been war on this earth. How quickly this showed itself in the children of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel! And since then the history of nations, — what is it but a continual history of warfare? Take our own country. We are living in a fairly peaceable country, but even in the last age of man we have passed through two different wars, and more than ninety cents of every dollar that we pay for taxes goes for fighting, for warfare and bloodshed. And yet the majority of men do not understand the situation. Although civilization, education, science, and culture have not brought peace (the most civilized nations have simply been the best fighters), men still imagine that some of these human factors bring peace. Men still expect peace to come out of the human heart, which is full of selfishness, vice, deception, hatred, and murder. No, peace can come from God alone. If man wishes for real, genuine peace, he must first of all have peace with God.

And — thanks be unto God! — the greatest peacemaker is God Himself. When, in consequence of the devil's lies, man had broken the peace with his Creator and was entirely unable to make peace again, God Himself in His great mercy and love found a way. That very One whose love manifested in creation had been spurned, determined to show man, this ungrateful and foolish creature, still greater love, love greater than that shown in creation, to give man a greater gift than Paradise itself. It was then, when man had sinned, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son," etc. Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, the Shiloh. That act of God's love caused one of our writers to sing: "Oh, wondrous love," etc. Hymn 191, 3 b. Yes, there is a great Peacemaker, who calls to us, "Be ye reconciled unto God." Through this mighty Word of Reconciliation there comes peace to all who accept the atonement of the Son of God. Through the teaching of God's Word, men become ashamed of their enmity towards God and of the consequent hatred

which is in their hearts also towards their fellow-men. They confess this their sin and iniquity and ask God to help them to overcome them and to heal them. And through God's gracious forgiveness there is bestowed upon these repentant sinners forgiveness, peace with God. These persons, then, first of all, are peace-possessors, they possess peace with God, they have God's forgiveness. And this Gospel of forgiveness attunes their hearts also to be forgiving towards their fellow-men. *These repentant and forgiving Christians, they are the peacemakers.* From being peace-possessors, men who have peace with God, they immediately become peacemakers. They have tasted the sweetness of peace, and they would now have others enjoy the same peace in God's family, leave the army of the devil, who wars against the Lord, and join the company of the great Prince of Peace. Thus they become peacemakers. Through their preaching and life they continually make peace between God and man and between man and man. Oh, what a blessed work, to be such a peacemaker and to bring two together who were separated, to join God and His chief visible creature! And these same people are continually making peace between themselves and others by forgiving their neighbor his trespasses. For they have learned to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Thus they ask God to forgive others, and they themselves also forgive. Can there be anything grander than to do such work of peacemaking?

2. Wherein the blessings of these peacemakers consist.

Text: "They shall be called the children of God." And when Jesus says they shall be called the children of God, He does not mean to indicate that there is a difference between being called a child of God and actually being a child of God, but He means to teach us that these peacemakers are called by God "children of God." God Himself calls these peacemakers His children, and therefore they are in reality His children. And therein consists their blessing. Think of it! What it means to be a child of God. It means: —

a) Adoption through forgiveness and faith into the beloved family of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." 1 John 3, 1.

b) It means that all other Christians are our brothers and sisters, such as David, Jonathan, Luther, and Amsdorf, etc. And we with Joseph, Moses, Peter, John, Paul, Tabitha, Martha, Mary, etc.

c) "All things must work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8, 28. (Predestination.)

d) Heirs of God. The inheritance. What riches here and hereafter! Ps. 17, 15; 16, 11; etc.

Come, come, be a peacemaker! Come, accept peace with God upon the basis of His own offer. You will never get a better offer. Free from the accursed, who under Satan make war against God and against man, join the army of Shiloh, be one of His own and participate in the work and in the blessings. S.

Suffering and Rejoicing with Jesus.

Matt. 5, 10—12.

The Lord Jesus invites all men to come to believe in Him and to follow Him. He would like to have every man, woman, and child on this earth to be one of His disciples and one of His followers. He wants every one to become one of His soldiers, a soldier of the Cross, but He wants each one to do that with both his eyes open. He wants no one to come to Him with any false hopes. He offers no fool's paradise. He does not wish us to believe that He is going to supply us with an abundance of bread and fish without our working or that He is going to teach us to walk on the water and to perform miracles and to win the admiration and the astonishment of the crowds by the marvelous things which we do and accomplish. He has given a fair warning to all who come to Him, by saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Matt. 16, 24. There have always been a number of people who need such a warning. But on the other hand, there are also those who imagine that it does not pay to follow Christ, that it means nothing more than denying yourself every joy, inviting the hatred of others, eating the bread of sorrow, and going through the fiery furnace of tribulations. Those who have this conception of the life of the Christian are also entirely mistaken. A true picture of what we may expect in the company of the Lord Jesus is painted for us right here in our text. In a few words this text tells us the story of

Suffering and Rejoicing with Jesus.

1. Suffering with the Lord Jesus.

This suffering consists: —

a) In persecution for righteousness' sake, *e. g.,* Abel. David by Saul. Ahimelech, 1 Sam. 21, 22. Joash, 2 Kings 11. Jesus. Apostles and martyrs. All Christians. John 16, 2; 1 Pet. 4, 12.

b) Reviling, *e. g.,* Joseph by his brethren. David by Goliath. Nehemiah, Neh. 2, 19. Jesus on the cross: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Paul at Athens: "This babbler." Acts 17, 18. All Christians. Matt. 10, 25.

c) Saying all manner of evil against us falsely for Jesus' sake, *e. g.,* Joseph in Potiphar's house. Naboth. Jesus accused of blasphemy and rebellion. Jesus and John the Baptist. Luke 7, 33. 34. Paul ac-

cused of desecrating the Temple, etc. Acts 21, 28. Christians in our day are accused of being narrow-minded, sectarian, intolerant.

At times this animosity, persecution, reviling and slander seems dormant or comes from quarters that lack influence and annoys us very little, but at times all this animosity and its manifestations become very virulent and are engineered by able men of power and become very painful and distressing, so that some may suffer unto the uttermost, not only in their own person, but in the person of their families and of their children. When these things come to us, should we then sit down and weep, regret our having joined the forces of the Lord, and believe our cause a lost cause? That is exactly what our enemies wish to accomplish. No; then we are to remember that Jesus tells us that those who thus suffer with Him are blessed because of this.

2. The joy and blessing of suffering with Christ.

Our text tells us repeatedly that, though we suffer with Christ, we have no reason to be distressed. (Text with emphasis on each *"blessed."*)

a) But is it a joyous thing to be compelled to suffer, to have people go about and tell lies about you, to have people hate you and revile you and persecute you? No; but all these things show the true Christian that he is now in the right company. Jesus says: "For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." If a person experience nothing at all of this persecution, reviling, hatred, and slander, he must doubt that he belongs to the Lord Jesus; for all followers of the Lord Jesus of whom the Scripture speaks suffered these things. True, not continually, not all in the same degree, but all tasted of this cup of sorrow more or less at some time or other. That is the first reason why we should be exceeding glad when these things come upon us. It is evidence of the genuine character of our Christianity.

b) The second reason is this, that we suffer these things *for the sake of the Lord Jesus.* "For My sake." Jesus suffered so much for us that we are glad to suffer something for Him. How could we ever say that in spite of danger we have confessed Jesus before men if such confession did not bring to us some suffering and distress? Therefore we are told of the apostles that they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to *suffer shame for His name.* Acts 5, 41. And Paul warned his people that they were not to be ashamed of him and his bonds and admonished Timothy that he was to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim. 2, 3.

c) The third reason why we are to be glad and to rejoice is, because all these revilings and these slanders are false. If we were not Christians, such slanders and revilings could be brought against us in truth; and what a horrible thing that would be if men could point their fingers at us and accuse us truthfully of all of which

Christians are accused falsely! Therefore Jesus said to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." What he had been accused of falsely they were accused of truthfully. Oh, let us, when false slanders and evil is spoken against us by lying tongues, let us rejoice that these things are not true!

d) But the last and most important reason of all is this: "Great is your reward in heaven." Of all those who are persecuted and slandered and reviled falsely for Jesus' sake it is said: Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, 1) here by faith, 2) yonder in eternity, face to face, knowing even as we are known, at His right hand, etc. S.

FIVE GREAT HYMNS.

Rock of Ages.

Heb. 13, 8.

The hymn we have just sung was written 154 years ago, in 1776, the very year of the declaration of our American independence. Its author is Augustus Montague Toplady (1740—1778), a very earnest and talented English clergyman, who was but thirty-six years of age at the time of its writing. Two years later he died, succumbing to tuberculosis. While his other 133 hymns and sacred lyrics are well-nigh forgotten, "Rock of Ages" is found to-day in practically all church hymnals. In fact, "no other English hymn can be named which has laid so broad and firm a grasp upon the English-speaking world." Regarded either as a sacred lyric or as a metrical epitome of certain well-known passages of the greatest of the worship-songs of the Church Universal. Accordingly it has found many translators, Wm. E. Gladstone, the great English statesman, alone translating it into Greek, Latin, and Italian.

Opening with the cry of the soul for divine help and refuge, contrasting the sinner's need and helplessness with God's infinite grace in Christ Jesus, and closing with the soul's exultation in triumphant certainty, this hymn glowingly glorifies Christ as the only and eternal and all-sufficient Savior from sin. Having been sung in the Church for over 150 years, it stands as a ringing reminder of the changeless and unchangeable character and covenant of the Savior of sinners. A song of the soul sighing for salvation, it serves as a singing sentinel, exhorting us to follow the faith once for all delivered to the saints and warning us against being carried about (aside, away) with a variety of novel, strange, foreign doctrines; for Jesus Christ, the one great Teacher of the faith, is always the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever. Heb. 13, 7—9, the unchanging and changeless Rock of the Ages for the soul's salvation and safety.

Both text and hymn invite us to behold —

Jesus Christ, the Rock of the Ages:

1. Our Righteousness; 2. Our Sanctification; 3. Our Redemption.

1.

We Christians glory not in human wisdom and philosophy, but in divine wisdom. And the first and foremost truth of God's revealed wisdom is the universally valid saying: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. 1, 15. Sin and death, however, receive their awful significance to the sinner from the holy Law of God; for as sin is the sting of death, so the strength of sin is the Law. 1 Cor. 16, 56. By the holy and just and spiritual Law of the thrice holy God is the knowledge of sin. Rom. 3, 20; 7, 12. 14. The demands of the Law render us "naked," "helpless," "foul," "empty" of merit in the sight of God. (Hymn, v. 3.)

But thanks be unto God, who hath made Him to be sin *for us* who knew no sin that, etc. 2 Cor. 5, 21. And while the Law threatened us with its stern and inflexible sentence: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," Ezek. 18, 4, the voice of the Gospel assures us with more powerful persuasion: "Christ hath redeemed (ransomed) us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse *for us;* for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. 3, 13; 4, 5; Eph. 1, 7; Deut. 21, 23; Rom. 4, 25; Jer. 23, 5. 6.

Oh, thou helpless, sin-stricken soul, see Him, the Holy, Righteous, Sinless One, David's Righteous Branch, dying upon the cross! Here is atonement, perfect propitiation and expiation for all thy sins. Ponder the mystery of that death, the Prince of Life dying, dead on the cursed, rude cross! And out of His pierced side there flows blood and water, the blood of atonement and the water of washing for sin's guilt and stains. John 19, 34; 1 John 5, 6. In faith, O soul, flee into the cleft of this Rock of Salvation, who is the same unchanging Savior for sinners to-day, as He was in ages past, the eternal Son of the eternal Father, Heb. 1, 10—12, and say in thine innermost heart, as Toplady said: —

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

No righteousness, no merit, no price of my own,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly, —
Wash me, Savior, or I die!

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8, 1, to them, that by faith in the perfect righteousness

exhibited in the sinless life and death of Jesus Christ, are clothed in the righteousness which avails before God, for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to *every one* that believeth. Rom. 10, 4. To every believing sinner Jesus, the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb of God, is made Righteousness by God Himself. 1 Cor. 1, 30. It is God that justifieth. Rom. 8, 33. "Fear not; I am the First and the Last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." Rev. 1, 17. 18. The same righteousness for sinners, believing in Me, yesterday, to-day and throughout the ages.

2.

Because Jesus Christ is our Righteousness, He is also our Sanctification. 1 Cor. 1, 30. Consecrated, set apart for God by faith in His atoning blood, we are saints in Christ Jesus, purified and clean through the blood of the everlasting covenant; by the one offering of His body we are sanctified once for all times, Jesus perfecting forever them that are sanctified. Heb. 10, 10. 14. From the moment of believing we are saints and holy in Christ Jesus, the object of our faith. But what is the effect of this sanctification by faith upon our heart and life? The effect is that the believer now delights in the Law of God after the inward man, Rom. 7, 22, for God hath not called us unto uncleanness and iniquity, but unto holiness. 1 Thess. 4, 7; Rom. 6, 18—22. The believer, like Paul, follows after holiness that he may apprehend (lay hold of, obtain, attain to) that for which also he is apprehended of Christ Jesus. Yea, this one thing every sincere believer in the atoning life and death of Christ does: forgetting those things which are behind him and reaching forth, straining, to those things which are before him, he presses on to the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the crown of righteousness. Phil. 3, 12—14. His perfect pattern is Jesus, who left him an example to follow in His steps. 1 Pet. 2, 21. This sanctification of the believer is the work of the Holy Spirit, who works in him through the Word, the Scriptures. John 17, 17; 2 Cor. 3, 18; Eph. 5, 25. 26; 1 Thess. 5, 23. 24.

"Hereafter our righteousness and sanctification alike shall be both perfect and inherent. Now the righteousness wherewith we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that wherewith we are sanctified is inherent, but nōt perfect." Hooker. Now sanctification is perfect in principle, but not in attainment. Therefore the "holiest" believer must confess: "Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect." Phil. 3, 12. And the "holiest" believer will ever have to join the humblest sinner in the confession: —

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

3.

Thus throughout the ages Jesus has been made the believer's Sanctification. But whenever the believer thinks of his failures in sanctification, he yearns and longs for final redemption, for complete deliverance of body and soul, from all evil. Thanks be to God that Jesus has been made unto us of God also Redemption! Looking at the past, we have been saved from the guilt and penalty of sin by our Savior; looking at the present, we are being saved from the habit and dominion of sin by Christ's Spirit; looking at the future, "the day of redemption," Eph. 4, 30, by *complete* and *final* liberation from the sin still lingering in us after our conversion and from all the ills and troubles of this life. Rom. 13, 11; Heb. 10, 36; 1 Pet. 1, 5; 1 John 3, 2.

While we have the Holy Spirit in us as a seal unto the day of redemption, we have but the first-fruits of the Spirit; we are waiting in hope for the final redemption (release) of our mortal body, from the bondage of corruption. Rom. 8, 23—25. Not seeing as yet what we hope for, we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is who has preceded us in glory to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the kingdom which cannot be moved. Heb. 12, 22. 28; 1 John 3, 2.

Such is our hope for final and complete redemption, and such was the holy and firm hope of all who have fallen asleep in Christ. And to sustain us in our hope, the inspired records present to us not only the death of Christ, but also the end of the conversation of the Church's spiritual leaders, of Stephen, of James, the brother of John. Acts 12, 2, etc. For every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure. 1 John 3, 3. This hope, springing as it does from faith and love toward our Savior, will make us have boldness even in the Day of Judgment. 1 John 4, 17.

Looking forward to the day of our complete and final redemption, we join our fellow-strangers and -pilgrims in this world in singing:

> While I draw this fleeting breath,
> When my eyelids close in death,
> When I soar to worlds unknown,
> See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee!

Two years after writing his immortal hymn the young author died, his last words being: "My prayers are all turned to praise."

The Gospel-message of this beautiful hymn will, though its author is dead, "conquer sinners, comfort saints," reminding them that Jesus Christ is always the same, the believing sinner's Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption, in all ages, able and ready to save to the uttermost.

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee!

SPECIAL NOTES. — The language of "Rock of Ages" is superb, virile, and vivid; forceful and colorful; austere, yet fervent; dignified, yet tender; its powerful impulse is under strict discipline. In contrast to its fine tone compare Samuel Medley's (1738—1799) "impossible" lines: —

A filthy dog I am by sin;
A furious dog, dear Lord, I've been;
A greedy dog in evil ways
And a dumb dog to all Thy praise.

Risum teneatis, amici!

In spite of its masterly language, "Rock of Ages" was not widely known and used for some fifty years after its composition. Note, in this connection, that the melody by Dr. Thomas Hastings, a musician as well as a hymn-writer, was not supplied until 1830, fifty-four years after the first appearance of the words. This is the tune to which it is usually sung. Some may prefer to sing it according to Redhead's "Gethsemane," No. 199 in our hymnal.

Do not think it superfluous to explain certain words, *e. g.*, "cleft," "riven," "respite."

The second line of the last stanza originally read: "When my eye-strings break in death," according to an old belief that, when a person dies, the eye-strings snap. Otherwise the hymn stands in our hymnal exactly as Toplady finally revised it.

The story connecting the origin of this hymn with the Cleft Rock at Burrington Combe, repeated even by Limmer Sheppard, in his *Great Hymns and Their Stories*, edition of 1923, is a "cunningly devised fable," as is so often the case with stories. Read Dr. John Julian's article *s. v.* in his epochal *Dictionary of Hymnology*. Reading "lesser lights" is always a waste of time. It speaks well for England's theological scholarship that from 1848 to 1889 six *Latin* translations were published. Gladstone's *Jesu, pro me perforatus*, 1848, is usually considered the best of these. What linguistic blessings would result if at our colleges such Latin translations were sung at chapel exercises!

O. W. WISMAR.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

Ps. 46, 11 b.

Two of the greatest accomplishments of Martin Luther for the Church were undoubtedly the translation of the Bible, so that God might speak directly to the people, and the introduction of an order of service with hymns in the vernacular, so that the people at worship might speak directly to God. Coleridge (1772—1834) is absolutely correct in estimating that "Luther did as much for the Reformation by his hymns [thirty-seven in number] as by his translation of the Bible." What a vast influence these two works of Luther have exerted may be best gaged by the fact that to-day the Bible is published in over eight hundred languages (dialects) and that congregational hymn-singing is a part of divine worship in the churches of all nations and tongues, even in some of the Roman faith.

How does it affect your Lutheran consciousness when you hear

that Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is sung to-day in 170 different languages? Knowing how humble, how modest, Luther himself was in appraising his poetic ability, we wonder how he himself would feel, were he living to-day, upon being told that "the Battle-hymn of the Reformation" is being sung in 170 different tongues. When a missionary in Western Africa (Christaller), who sang many of Luther's hymns on his long expeditions, had sung "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" for the first time, his native interpreter remarked: "That man Luther must have been a powerful man; *one can feel it in his hymns.*" Indeed! And we make bold to say that every one who really knows and rightly understands this one heroic hymn holds the key to a correct understanding and estimate of the great Reformer's entire personality and power as a spiritual leader. Only a Luther could speak and sing in such mighty, majestic, massive measures, molded spontaneously in a mind and heart that rooted and rested secure and unafraid in God's eternal pledges and promises. Great was his faith!

As Jacob of old prevailed and had power with God and men, so did Luther. And so may we also have power if we have his firm and living faith in the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Captain and Champion of our salvation. — On the basis of our text and hymn let us learn anew that

The God of Jacob Is Our Refuge.

1. Therefore will we not fear; but
2. Be strong and rejoice in the Lord.

1.

Ever since Adam, after the Fall, "was afraid," Gen. 3, 10, man has been haunted and harrowed by fear. And well might we fear if we had to depend upon our own might and power to stand before God in the Judgment. How often are even we Christians assailed by our conscience, by Satan, by our enemies' *coups* and cavils! We all know through what torments and agonies Luther passed because of the darts of the devil and the demands of God's holy and stern Law before he obtained rest and peace of conscience in the conviction that he was saved from sin and wrath through the strong and mighty Son of God, who is able to save to the uttermost all those who put their trust in Him. Having wrestled with God in prayer, like Jacob at Peniel, he committed his soul to the God of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, to Him whose pledge and promise cannot be broken, who has ever been a Refuge to the sinner who seeks Him and thirsts after righteousness. Fears vanish as the sinner finds rest unto his soul in the Jesus of Jacob's God, in whom all divine promises are yea and amen. 2 Cor. 1, 20. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1.

Peace with God, joy in the hope of the glory of God, strength and power in God, who is our Refuge and Strength, this is the God-given antidote to fear. Ps. 46, 1; 62, 7. 8. But, alas! the conflict is not ended. What of tribulation or persecution *because of the Word?* Matt. 13, 21. Luther, together with all saints, had to endure many tribulations, persecutions, afflictions, distresses, because of the Word, because of the faith which he professed and preached. Cf. Acts 8, 1; 13, 50; Rom. 8, 35; 2 Cor. 12, 10; 2 Thess. 1, 4; 2 Tim. 3, 11. 12. Ah, how many fell away from the faith delivered once for all to the saints, how many were offended, Matt. 13, 21, because of the enemies confronting them! Fear, the old tyrant, took hold of them in the hour of trial; for, like Peter, they did not look upon their Savior's face, but upon the enemies, the assailants of their faith.

Let us not be deceived. The man of faith, the man who lives his faith, has enemies, many and mighty enemies. Paul had hordes of them on all sides, and so did Luther. While we do not know in which of the years from 1521 to 1529 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" was written, we know this, that Luther is speaking from his own experience when he measures, musters, his enemies and assailants. Thousands (50,000 in the Netherlands alone) were being executed for their faith, craftily called "new" (= "novel") by the enemies, Luther and his adherents had been placed under the ban, Emperor and Pope were threatening to force Lutherans into subjection, and the emperor had informed the Elector of Saxony that he would spare neither life nor limb, neither wife nor child. Church and State were joining hands to stamp out the "new heresy," which was called a "dangerous doctrine," that man is saved *alone* through faith in Jesus' blood and righteousness. Ah, dear friends, there was great danger of fear! Would you have been afraid?

But who is the real foe that inspires and stirs up these visible enemies? Who is the arch-enemy that originates all opposition to the truth and its followers and stirs up enmity against them? Do you know him? Have you had real experience with him in your spiritual life? At all events, Luther knew and realized who the real foe was, even as St. Paul, many centuries ago, had known and experienced it. Eph. 6, 11. 12. It was none other than the Father of Lies, the Murderer from the beginning, John 8, 44, who was, and still is, the most bitter enemy of this faith. And wherever you meet hatred, contempt, enmity, and opposition to God's truth to-day, rest assured, dear friend, that it is the devil, the old Serpent, who is sponsoring it. Luther knew and understood him with clearest Christian insight when he traced the fierce threats of violence and the cunning and crafty designs back to their ultimate source, saying: "The old Evil Foe," etc.

Confronted with such a foe, we might well quake, quiver, and

tremble if we stood in our own might. But the foe is being unmasked and must no longer frighten us. Yea, "though devils all the world should fill," etc., we should not fear or tremble. (See Eph. 6, 12; 1 Pet. 5, 8; Rev. 12, 9; Ps. 2, 2.) And indeed, "we will not fear," etc. Ps. 46, 2. 3.

Such is the fearlessness of the believer who from his whole heart has determined that the God of Jacob, and none other, is to be his Refuge and Strength, his high Tower and his Fortress. And if we are inclined to cowardice and fear, let us remember that it is God who says to us: "Fear not, I am with thee; oh, be not dismayed!"

2.

What made Luther so bold, so fearless, so dauntless, so defiant, over against all opposition and enmity, in every need that overtook or at least threatened him? There is but one answer — *faith*. Heb. 11. Faith in what? In whom? Many who are hero-worshipers have admitted Luther's courage; many who profess to believe in God, but do not honor the Son have glorified Luther, lauding his dauntless fearlessness, and sung his praises as "a great man." But they have not understood the fearless fighter. Their glorying would not sound good to the faithful and fearless confessor of Wittenberg and Worms, if he could hear them. Just as we sadly part company with those who deride Luther's experiences with the devil and the demons of darkness, Eph. 6, 11. 12, so we consciously and deliberately condemn the petty praise of those who would make Luther great in his own might. Why, he himself confutes them; for he sings of Another, a Confederate, who was his All-in-all, in whom he reposed his whole confidence: "With might of ours can *naught* be done ... Ask ye, Who is this?" And now "give ear, O ye heavens, and hear, O earth!" Deut. 32, 1. He continues: "Jesus Christ it is ... field forever." (For "of Sabaoth Lord" see Ps. 46, 7. 11; Phil. 2, 10. 11; Heb. 12, 22—24.)

Does that trumpet give an uncertain sound? 1 Cor. 14, 8. Surely not.

It was solely because the Reformer was strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, Eph. 6, 10, that we have a fearless, dauntless, defiant Luther. The God of Jacob, *i. e.*, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1, 3. 17; 1 Pet. 1, 3, who had pledged Himself to Jacob of old by a promise and whom Esau, his hostile brother, had rejected, was Luther's Refuge and Rest in all his troubles, trials, temptations, afflictions, persecutions.

But Luther is not only strong in the Lord, he also rejoices in the Lord, rejoices as only he can rejoice in whose heart true, living faith has been kindled. Phil. 3, 1; 4, 4. And his rejoicing is that of one who has overcome all fear of the enemy, who is confident and convinced that there is absolutely *no need* of fear. (Quote stanza 3

in full.) Remember, dear friend, that the prince of this world is judged, has been judged. John 16, 7—11. The issues of eternity are settled. What power the devil still exercises can be vanquished, as Christ has shown, by a single little word. Matt. 4, 10. 11.

God is our Refuge and Strength, *our* God; that means, God as we know Him in Christ Jesus. Whence only do we know Christ? Only from the Word. Jesus in the Old Testament. The apostles preached Jesus as foretold in Moses and the Prophets, and any one who has believed in Jesus has known Him only through the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. 1 Pet. 1, 23. 25. And this Word lives and does not return void, because it is the Holy Spirit's all-sufficient and powerful instrument for establishing and preserving the kingdom of God, a kingdom which abides, while all else perishes: "goods, fame, child, and wife." See Matt. 22, 30. Now quote stanza 4 in full. (Of all the admirable features of this great hymn none strikes me as much as the wonderful climax reached at the very end: "*The kingdom* ours remaineth." Our God, the God of Jacob, His Chosen One, Jesus Christ, sts. 1. 2, His Spirit and His "good gifts," *e. g.,* faith, hope, love, consolation, strength, fearlessness, illumination, joy, etc., st. 4, these are the "fortress" of "the man of faith," of the true Church. The assailants, Satan and his cohorts, the other devils [demons] and human enemies, are pitted against these. Over what? "The kingdom.")

"Therefore will not we fear." Ps. 46, 2. Why not? Because the Lord Jesus, and He only, is our Strength and our Joy. His Word, and His Word only, shall make us glad. Ps. 46, 4. It is the Water of Life, the river whose streams make glad, and shall make glad, the city of God. "God is in the midst of her [His living Church]; she shall not be moved." In the day of trouble and tribulation, persecution and affliction, oppression and assault, God, her Refuge, her Strength, her very present Help, shall help her indeed, and that right early (literally: "at the approach, appearing, of morning"). Ps. 46, 6. As the Church of old was defended by God (Sennacherib's 185,000, 2 Kings 19, 35), as He intervened in her behalf, so let the Church ever refrain from instruments of politics or of war to defend her cause, but let her rest and recline and lean only and alone upon that God who reminds her in words of loving assurance: —

> Be still and know that I am God;
> I will be exalted among the nations;
> I will be exalted in the earth.

And 170 nations have hearts and voices in their midst to rejoice and sing: "A mighty Fortress ... and Weapon."

> God is our Refuge and Strength,
> A very present Help in trouble.
> The Lord of hosts is with us;
> The God of Jacob is our Refuge.

Conclusion.—We have studied a great, a grand, a glorious hymn, inspired by the opening words of Ps. 46. The more we study it, the more must we admire its mighty, massive, majestic materials and mettle as well as its heroic melody, which, most likely, was also composed by Luther. May we, however, not merely admire it, but let it inspire in our hearts that holy and heroic faith which inspired its author and which ever confesses: The God of Jacob is our Refuge and Strength; therefore will not we fear. Let us sing its stirring strains as triumphant conquerors, strong in the Lord and rejoicing in God, our Savior. Phil. 4, 13; Rom. 8, 31. 37.

NOTE. — *Luther's Hymns*, by James F. Lambert, 1917, will prove very stimulating and instructive. Pages 40—50 are devoted to "A Mighty Fortress."

O. W. WISMAR.

Just as I Am.

Luke 15, 20.

"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6, 37. This precious promise and pledge of our Savior involuntarily comes to our mind when we sing this most famous of Charlotte Elliott's 150 hymns. (Born at Brighton, England, 1789, died there 1871.) In fact, the hymn expresses the believing soul's spontaneous response to the Savior's assuring invitation. And when we go back to the original publication of the hymn in Charlotte Elliott's *Invalid's Hymn-book*, of 1836, we actually find this Bible-verse given as the heading of her immortal song. Almost a hundred years have passed since the blessed hymn left the invalid lady's quiet sick-room, and it is sung to-day in all lands in which the great Gospel promise of Jesus is proclaimed, sung as if it were the confession of each worshiper's own soul. Is there in the whole range of hymnology another hymn which so beautifully, directly, and perfectly expresses the confessing penitent's mind in approaching his Savior as this plain and plaintive poem of a Christian lady, who for fifty years of her long life (82 years) was an invalid?

At any rate, we are sure that in the whole range of Scripture we have no more telling and touching exemplification of the love of Jesus to confessing and penitent believers than in His precious parable of the Prodigal Son, recorded Luke 15, the chapter of chapters for sin-sick and sorrowing penitents crying for pardon and peace. "And he arose and came." Wonderful words, baffling all analysis of the psychologists! And when he arrived, what a reception! Baffling to all self-righteous religionists.

Combining text and hymn, let us reassure our hearts and minds by pondering the greatest mystery of heaven and earth: —

Penitent Faith Meeting Pardoning Love.

1. The supreme victory of faith; 2. The supreme victory of love.

1.

A) In Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son (called "lost" and "dead," vv. 24. 32) we have the master method of Scripture of teaching once more: two sons, v. 11, as types, to drive home most forcefully a doctrine, a truth. Compare, *e. g.,* Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, the parable Matt. 21, 28—32, etc. The importance of the truth taught by Jesus in Luke 15 places this parable above all others. Describe the younger son's — it is purely accidental that it is the *younger* son — successive degradations as given vv. 12—16. a) In a far country. The farther away from parental authority, the better it suits him. The farther away from God's sight, — so the sinner argues, deceiving himself, — the better. Cp. Jonah. b) Wasting his substance with riotous living. V. 13. Devoured his living with harlots. V. 30. This seemed to him "the better way" for the time being. (So "the pleasures of sin" always. Heb. 11, 25. Note the delusion of the Serpent, which *always* accompanies sin.) He has gone the limit, "spent all." V. 14.

B) But there is no thought of home, father, and his proper estate as "son" even now. As is often the case, the misery due to sin is increased by a dispensation of Providence in the external world — a mighty famine, in this instance. In the case of Jonah, a mighty tempest, 1, 4. With *nothing left,* positions for gaining a livelihood at a premium, a famine in addition, the *quondam* voluptuary is indeed miserable. No man desiring him, he went and joined himself to a citizen of that far-away country. Feeding swine, performing the most menial service, eating the coarsest food, husks (*keration,* the pod of the carob-tree) that the swine did eat, for no man gave him anything. Ps. 73, 22.

C) At last, after long delay, "he came to himself," came to his senses. Vv. 17—19. (Cp. David's long delayed repentance. 2 Sam. 12; Ps. 51.) His utter misery prompts reflection. Sin had been his master, depriving him of self-control. The great realization, I have sinned. The great mystery of psychology. "Against heaven," true ethical repentance, after forgetting all about Heaven. "Before thee," the human, the visible person, sinned against. Fully aware that he has forfeited all filial claims. Emphasize the *humility* of the penitent *versus* the erstwhile pride and recklessness of the prodigal. Resolve ripens into action. "He arose and came to his father." "Poor" as ever pauper there was, "wretched" as ever wretch was, nothing in his hand, foul, gaunt, ragged, unworthy, he came. Just as he was, he came. Mark well the mystery of faith: he came. The trail was long from the far-away country to his father's house, but he came. Such is the victory of faith. Faith's supreme victory, that such a one can return to heaven's holy home. He came to his father, craving

to be *his* again, though it be but in a hireling's position. Penitent, humble faith has once more triumphed.

D) Leaving our Bible-story at this point, we return to the writer of our hymn. She has been an invalid for ten years, has been "tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt," has experienced "fightings and fears within, without" over her sad condition. One day a man from far-away Geneva, by the name of César Malan (1787—1864), a French minister of great missionary zeal, visited Charlotte Elliott. Being endowed with a remarkable mind and great talents, she often had religious doubts, conflicts, fears, and fightings on account of her affliction. How should, how could, she come to Jesus? How should she approach the Savior for peace and pardon? "Come, just as you are," advised César Malan. (An interesting character, by the way; an indefatigable *personal* missionary, rejoicing to speak to individual souls, but unable to break away from state-church alignments. Read at least the article in Schaff-Herzog.) This unique man's spiritual advice given a wavering, doubting soul resulted in a hymn sung the world over, the peculiar clause, "Just as I am," being exceptionally impressive and appealing. (Hymn 533 in our hymnal is a translation of Malan's *Non, ce n'est pas mourir,* the only one of his thousand hymns to "hold itself" beyond its native language. He is the originator of the modern hymn-movement in the French Reformed Church, and his influence on C. Elliott's hymns is undeniable.)

E) All through the centuries, sinners have come to Jesus just as they were. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," is the standing invitation of the Prophet, Priest, and King of God's own appointment. Matt. 11, 28. To come to Jesus means to believe in Jesus. (See opening statement of Luther's explanation of Third Article.) And to come to Jesus is identical with coming to the Father, for He and His Father are one. John 10, 30; 17, 21—24. In fact, Jesus' invitations extended to sinners to come to Him are all assertions of His coequality with the Father and are justifiable *only if He is God.* Matt. 9, 1—8. So, for instance, also His demand upon the rich young ruler to sell all and follow Him is an assertion of His deity; for none but God has a right (power, authority) to make such a demand. Matt. 21, 21. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. John 14, 6. 9. That is so plain and powerful a statement that by it every claim of leading to the Father by a different way is branded as false. And any sinner who ever came to the Father came to Him by the one and only Way — Jesus, blessed forever. And every sinner who ever came to Jesus came with the same sentiments in his heart as are voiced by Charlotte Elliott in her hymn. (Here recite first two stanzas of hymn.) Such is the victory of faith, the supreme victory, overcoming all things that are against us. See Rom. 8, 28—39.

2.

"And he arose and came to his father." When penitent faith approached and met divine love, what happened? Was there any disappointment for the confessing penitent? If you know God, you know there could be no disappointment to humble and contrite believers. The doubts and fears (stanza 3 of hymn) are all of our own making. Jesus' assurance stands firm as eternal foundation: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6, 37. What kind of a reception awaited the prodigal son at his home-coming? Ah, you know the story well. But did you ever notice how exquisitely and graphically the reception accorded the son by the rejoicing father is described?

A) When the penitent sinner was yet a great way off, his father saw him. He had often been looking for the lost one, and now his loving, longing eye recognizes him at once, though sin has made him gaunt and degraded him. The woeful plight instantly arouses pity in the father. He has compassion on him. And compassionate, pitying love impels the father to run toward the son with arms opened wide in welcome. They are face to face. The arms of the father embrace the son, and heart beats against heart, while the father fervently and frequently kisses (*katephilesen*) his returned child. (So also of Judas's kiss, Matt. 26, 49, and of the woman who was a great sinner. Luke 7, 38. 45.) While the return of the sinner is earth's greatest mystery, the reception accorded the returning sinner is heaven's greatest mystery. The "lost chord" is recovered; penitent faith has found heaven's pardoning love, and there is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God, etc. Vv. 7. 10. Here is the climax of all theology — the Father's heart and the sinning child's heart beat in perfect harmony; mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Psalm 85, 10. Faith's supreme victory is surpassed only by heaven's supreme victory of love. Repeat v. 20 b. No one understands God who does not understand those words in their spiritual import.

B) And no one understands the love of God as manifested in Christ Jesus whose heart is not moved by that scene, the joy of the father in finding his lost son. Surely, "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1, 15; Luke 5, 30—32; 15, 2; 19, 10. It is a faithful saying, *i. e.*, it is true of all men, in all ages, in all places, and in all cases. It is worthy to be received by all persons in all ages and places that Christ Jesus, the Heaven-sent, God-appointed Savior, came into the world to save sinners. Recite stanzas 4—6. What a glorious salvation Christ has bestowed upon sinners! Sight, riches, healing of the mind, yea, all we need, we find in Him. Those who believe, who take Him at His word, He welcomes, pardons, cleanses,

relieves. Yea, His love, unknown and baffling all analysis, His love, which was stronger than death, has broken every barrier down, so that the sinner, the most wretched, the vilest sinner, can come to Him and say: "Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come." The malefactor came to Him, praying pleadingly: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Did He reject him? Perish the very thought! He whose unfailing promise: "I will in no wise cast him out," has been pledged, replied: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Luke 23, 42. 43. That was written for your comfort and for mine, sinner.

C) All these assurances of God and of Christ, so comforting and reassuring to the sinner that repents, are an offense to the self-righteous, who fancy they need no repentance. This class is represented in our parable by the other son, who was angry and would not join in the joy over the returned sinner. Vv. 25—32. This class is a source of danger even to the returned penitent. If he would begin to *consider their objections,* he might lose his faith. But faith, true faith, does not regard the objections of the self-righteous, but clings to the faithful promise of the ever-faithful Savior: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." And lest we be inclined to misunderstand, He has said it both negatively and positively: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Luke 5, 32. We are dead, also to self-righteousness and its delusions, and our life is hid with Christ in God, with Christ who sitteth on the right hand of God. When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. Col. 3, 1. 3. 4.

D) Until then we shall endure whatever ridicule, enmity, and contempt, yea, persecution, the self-righteous bestow upon us. We know that He, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, 1 Pet. 2, 25, is with us and will comfort us. Relying upon His unfailing promises, we join David, one of the penitent sinners returned to the great Shepherd, in his triumphant conviction: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

SPECIAL NOTES. — The melody to which this hymn is sung is superbly suited to the words. It was composed thirteen years after the words had first appeared, while Toplady's "Rock of Ages" was fifty-four years old before Hastings supplied the popular melody. — In 1836 the hymn appeared also in Miss Elliott's *Hours of Sorrow Cheered and Comforted,* with an additional, seventh, stanza: —

Just as I am, of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

The repetition of "I come" is Bradbury's (the composer's) idea.

There are two Latin translations: *Ut ego sum, nec alia ratione utens,* by Bingham, 1871, and *Tibi, qualis sum, O Christe,* by Macgill.

Another hymn of Miss Elliott's is found in our hymnal and practically in all English hymnals: "My God, my Father," No. 386, a gem of purest quality, content and form excellent. For those in sickness and sorrow she has sung as few others.

The story repeated in many books on hymnology connecting the hymn with a frivolous dance Miss Elliott is supposed to have attended is a "cunningly devised fable"; plainly so, for she had been an invalid ten years when this hymn was written. — "Just as I Am" is admirably adapted for use during distribution of the Lord's Supper.

O. W. WISMAR.

O That I Had a Thousand Voices!

Col. 3, 16.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE. — This magnificent hymn of John Mentzer (1658 to 1734), one of the longest in our hymn-book, No. 62, a translation, from the pen of Henry Mills, D. D., of No. 349 in our German hymnal, is worth singing in its entirety. It can very conveniently be sung in these subdivisions: Stanzas 1—5, a resolve and an invitation to praise God for His many mercies; 6—8, doxology to the Trinity, before the sermon; 9—13, appreciation of "chastenings," after the sermon; 14. 15, at the close of the service, a very appropriate ending. For the sake of variation use Dretzel's melody of 1731, No. 62, pitched one tone higher at No. 345, English hymnal, or Koenig's of 1738, originally composed for Mentzer's hymn, No. 311, English hymnal, or even a third melody. It is an admirable communion of the soul with God, excellently adapted also for private devotion. The translation is only fairly good, as a reading of the original will reveal, but Dr. Mills's is still the best one on record.

Gratitude to God is a virtue we need ever to cultivate. Significantly does St. Paul say of the non-Christians, "They glorified Him not as God, *neither were thankful.*" Rom. 1, 21. And the exhortation immediately preceding our text reads: Be ye thankful, learn to be duly appreciative of God's manifold blessings. Col. 1, 15. 17. Thus also in the Old Testament the psalmists rouse their own hearts, Ps. 103, 1 ff.; 101, 1, as well as the hearts of their fellow-worshipers to grateful acknowledgments of the goodness, loving-kindness, and faithfulness which God has shown His people. Ps. 100; 95, 1. 2; 33, 1—3; 118.

An ingrate will not sing. But what of the grateful heart? Ah, it must sing praises to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed forever, yea, shout in joyful strains. Col. 3, 17. Any one who has experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus will feel that the praises we sing to God but very faintly do justice to the great things which God has done for us (stanza 1), fail properly to "declare the wonders of His might" (st. 5), the *magnalia Dei.* Acts 2, 11. Such

a one will exclaim with the author of our hymn: "O that I had a thousand voices, a mouth to speak with thousand tongues!" (Same sentiment in Charles Wesley's hymn "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (No. 108) — very beautiful!)

Moreover, the sacred songs we sing are not merely thank-offerings of our hearts and lips to God. Heb. 13, 15. In the wonderful wisdom of our great Lord they are also a very effective means of teaching and exhorting others. How often have we been taught a new truth of divine wisdom or admonished to a more consecrated service of our Master through a hymn! How rich in content is, for instance, our present hymn! How abundantly it encourages us to show greater gratitude to God!

On the basis of our text and our hymn let us consider —

The Singing Church.

1. Making melody to the Lord.
2. Publishing the message of the Lord.

1.

What prompts the Christian believer to sing and make melody to the Lord? The grace, the unmerited, undeserved kindness, of the Lord which he has experienced through the call of the Holy Spirit. The peace of God rules in his heart as a result of that call of the Holy Ghost, as it rules in the whole Christian Church, the "one body" of Him who is the Head over all. Col. 3, 15.

a) The glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, the Gospel, "the Word of Christ" (the prase occurs only here, but is identical with "the Word of God," "the Word of the Lord," 1 Thess. 1, 8; 2, 13; 2 Thess. 3, 1), is not only the means by which we have been called into the everlasting kingdom, it is also the daily food of our souls, by partaking of which we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ unto sanctification. 2 Pet. 3, 18; John 17, 17. Growth, increase, perfection, is the goal of every believer. But how many are inclined to forget this! How often are we prone to take a vacation in the vocation of holiness! Therefore St. Paul admonishes his converts at Colossae and the Christians of all generations: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly!" The Word of Christ, the heavenly, revealed wisdom, is to find a dwelling-place, a habitation, in our hearts. Being renewed by the Holy Ghost, the saints are to cast out all malice and wickedness and have hearts of sincerity and truth, as Jesus did. 1 Cor. 6, 8; Col. 3, 5—15. Richly, abundantly, in measures large and generous, the Word of the Lord is to dwell in their hearts.

b) The effect of having this Guest in their hearts will be joy, holy, sane, sober joy. Not the joys of profligacy and carnal ecstasy induced by wine or other spirituous drink partaken of to excess, but

joy in the Holy Ghost. To be filled with the Spirit of Holiness is a grand and glorious condition of mind for all Christians. Eph. 5, 18. It is quite significant that the mockers on Pentecost morning at Jerusalem accused the Spirit-filled apostles of being full of new wine. Acts 2, 11. But then, they were "mockers," a class that will always be with us.

c) Look at some of the glorious psalms which we read responsively at our services or sing in metrical arrangements. Look at some of our glorious hymns, hallowed by the sacred use of centuries and yet as refreshing and renewing to our hearts and minds as if we ourselves were the authors and originators. (Take, for example, this heavenly hymn of John Mentzer. Do you not feel the verve and vibration of God's Spirit as you read or sing it?) Look at the spiritual songs, whether sung by the entire congregation or by a choir or by a soloist, whether sung in church or at home. All of them sing and make melody to the Lord. That is the surest way of determining a true spiritual song. Does it sing to the Lord? Does it tell of His mercies, His truth, His love? Imagine, if you can, the communion of saints here on earth sitting at all times wrapt in mute and mystic silence, never opening their lips to sing and shout praises and thanksgiving to their Lord, their glorious Master! Ah, it's inconceivable, unthinkable! Is. 54, 1; 52, 9; 44, 23. In this last passage Isaiah calls upon the forest to join in the great song of praise to Jehovah, as Mentzer also does in the fourth stanza. The goodness of God, His grace, shown to the sinner is a theme that always has engaged, and always will engage, the true believers ("powers implanted," st. 3).

d) That this audible singing is to be but the expression of an inner song of praise, an inward worship and devotion, Eph. 5, 19, is expressed in the phrase "in your hearts." Mere lip-praise is an abomination to God. In the stillness of the heart there arises a melody, a singing to God, which seeks expression. This singing of the heart is so genuine that it prevails even in days of trouble and trial. Cf. Paul and Silas at Philippi singing praises unto God in prison at the midnight hour. Acts 16, 25. A wonderful scene! They had melody and song in their hearts. The author of our hymn was also greatly tried in the furnace of affliction, yet how appreciatively He sings of it to the Lord, whose "rod" brought him nearer to Him. It is an echo of Ps. 119, 71: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." "He that has not suffered, what does he know?" (See sts. 9—13.) In all his afflictions John Mentzer's heart kept close to the Lord and sought to magnify Him who is the Friend of sinners. He found like-minded friends, who had also given their hearts to the Lord, in J. C. Schwedler (1672—1730), Henriette Catherine von Gersdorf, N. L. von Zinzendorf (1700—60), all of whom were hymn-writers and all his near neighbors.

So has the love of Christ ever been the theme of Christian singers and psalmists, and this hymn, a paean of praise, though written over 200 years ago (1704), is still sung to the Lord as a song of praise and jubilant thanksgiving, appropriately expressing the song of the heart devoted to our Lord and Savior.

2.

a) However, the singing Church, while making melody to the Lord and magnifying Him in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, is also publishing the message of the Lord, the Gospel; for even when singing, the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim. 3, 15. And if the singers are filled with the Spirit, Eph. 5, 18, their expressions of spiritual devotion and thankfulness will always contain the two main elements of evangelic preaching: Repent and believe. By such singing the Christians *teach* and *admonish* one another. Is it not remarkable that in the same letter Paul uses these two same verbs of his own activity in preaching? Whom we preach, *scil.*, Christ, the Hope of glory, (admonishing) warning every man and teaching every man. Col. 1, 27. 28. And the identical aim and object is had in view by the singing Church when she makes melody in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs — she is proclaiming and publishing the message of her Lord, by testifying to His Truth.

b) This testimony is to be made "in all wisdom." (We take this phrase to belong properly to the two participles.) Again, this is exactly what Paul says of his preaching: warning every man and teaching every man *in all wisdom.* There is to be no blind and blundering zeal about this part of Christian activity. There are in Christian work other matters besides singing and making melody: prayer and intercession, Bible study and preaching, silent meditation and bringing of offerings. And so, while St. Paul exhorts us to give thanks *always*, the heart always being properly attuned, if grateful, he by no means says that we should always sing and make melody to the Lord, that we should always speak to ourselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. No, this would not do; for there are other acts of worship.

c) Let us be sure of our convictions in this matter. 1 Cor. 14 is the great chapter establishing the prophetic (or teaching) function as the supreme function of the Church. Vv. 1. 3. 4, etc. Edification, exhortation, comfort, are the aims of teaching in the Church. In v. 15 Paul makes the unique statement: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." And then comes his climax: vv. 18. 19. Rather five words spoken so that others understand in order that he might *teach* others also than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. This applies to our hymns and psalms and spiritual songs to-day as well: they must teach, must

instruct the mind, in "the Word of Christ," in the testimony of God concerning Christ, otherwise they are not the kind to use in Christian worship. Note how our present hymn meets this requirement: especially vv. 6—8, addressed to the Trinity, and the Christian instruction on "the stroke," "the rod," "sorrows," "troubles," "earthly griefs," vv. 9—13. And imagine the effect on a person who has been murmuring, grumbling, and cursing his lot, when he hears the assembly of God's people sing: "O that I had a thousand voices," etc. (sts. 1, 2). Ah! there is great power to teach in our singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs if employed in all wisdom.

d) In that same chapter (1 Cor. 14) St. Paul says again: "How is it, then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm," etc. V. 26. Note that interesting statement — "a psalm." In the church at Corinth. The rhythm, the elevation, the verve of poetry, its imagery, has always had a great effect upon the mind. And here "every one of you hath a psalm." "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" most likely represent three kinds of sacred singing, as Paul would hardly have them in identical order in Eph. 5, 19 and Col. 3, 16, if he were simply using synonyms for rhetorical force. Note that in the Corinthian church even the psalm may have been "delivered," or sung, by a soloist — "every one of you hath a psalm." Just what the distinctions between the three kinds of sacred songs were is impossible to say, but one has the feeling that there are three classifications intended. — Compare here also James's advice: 5, 13: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." At any rate, we can rest assured that all three classes "taught," edified, exhorted, comforted, the hearers as well as the performers. There were no vocal gymnastics or mere technical tonal displays. If you do not believe it, read 1 Cor. 14 once more.

As we are aware that our "earthly lays" are but weak, stammering attempts at praising God appropriately, so also are we aware that our knowledge is fragmentary, "in part," and our prophesying is in part. 1 Cor. 13, 9. 10. How fitly and aptly therefore the hymn closes with this humble sentiment: "A nobler strain in heaven shall reach Thee," etc. (Quote all of stanza 15.)

Conclusion. — While Mentzer's hymn is a most admirably constructed poem of thanksgiving and praise to God, note its equally admirable teaching qualities. I have always been pleased when in the course of a doctrinal discussion some one chimes in and says, "Why, that's what we sing in such and such a hymn!" Exactly, brother. Let us take hymns such as these and read them before services begin or at home for private devotion. Then we shall become able to teach and admonish one another by them and thus live the life Jesus wishes us to live, as He has commanded us through His

apostle. Eph. 5, 19; Col. 3, 16. (Compare Cowper's hymn No. 200, where in the last stanza we find the same sentiment as in Mentzer's conclusion.)

Special Notes. — Johann Mentzer, like J. C. Schwedler and N. L. Zinzendorf, his friends, wrote a great many hymns; over thirty of them appeared in the various hymn-books of his time. But only one, his great psalm of praise and thanksgiving, has "conquered" and survives. This, his best hymn, was first published as No. 496 in Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch* of 1704. Note that Dretzel's melody is twenty-seven years later; Koenig's, thirty-four. Remember that melodies, or "tunes," are powerful factors in perpetuating a hymn. One or two more of Mentzer's hymns are still sung in certain localities, both in Germany and elsewhere, for instance, *Du gehst in den Garten beten* (twelve stanzas of six lines each), based on Matt, 26, 36—46, translated by J. Kelly in 1868: "Into the Garden Shade to Pray"; also, *Wer das Kleinod will erlangen*, founded on 1 Cor. 9, 24. 25, a call to spiritual energy, translated by Miss Winkworth in 1858: "Who Would Make the Prize His Own." Most of Mentzer's — not Menzer, as in our English hymnal (except in the new Word Edition) — hymns are of high merit, full of ardent love to Christ, Scriptural, poetical, and popular in style.

O. W. Wismar.

There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood.

Zech. 13, 1.

"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh have been called." 1 Cor. 1, 26. This observation applies also to literary men. How few of the world's great poets have been Christians! How few of them have used their powers to magnify the Lord in hymns and spiritual songs to be used in private or congregational worship! Thus, in all of English literature, besides Joseph Addison, Wm. Cowper, 1731—1800, son of an English clergyman, is the only one of England's great poets who, to a large extent and professionally, devoted his talent to writing hymns. He himself once remarks on this situation in one of his longer poems: —

> It is the sad complaint, and almost true,
> Whate'er we write we bring forth nothing new.
> 'Twere new indeed to have a bard, on fire,
> Touched with a coal from heaven, assume the lyre
> And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,
> With more than mortal music on his tongue,
> That He who died below and reigns above
> Inspires the song and that His name is Love.

Of his many hymns the best known is the hymn we have just sung: "There is a fountain." It appeared in the first book of the Olney Hymns, all of which are based on select texts of Scripture, published by his friend, the Rev. John Newton, in 1779; but it may have been written as early as 1771. In the Olney Hymns it bears

the heading: "Praise for the Fountain Opened" and the text on which it is based is given, Zech. 13, 1. Quote text. Since this prophecy of Zechariah's inspired this strangely attractive hymn, with its sustained confidence and rapture, let us in rapt devotion behold —

The Mystery of the Opened Fountain.

1. Its mysterious nature; 2. Its mysterious power.

1.

Zechariah, prophesying for the comfort of the remnant returned from the seventy years' captivity, about five hundred years before Christ, besides recording other symbolic visions, predicts that "in that day there shall be a fountain opened." In what day? In the day visualized in 12, 10. 11, when "they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced."

That Friday on which Jesus was hanging upon the cross "was a high day" in more than one sense. It was a day where "the hopes and fears of all the years" met in baffled consternation. Jesus has bowed His head and given up His spirit. John 19, 30. 31. With Pilate's permission the soldiers come and break the legs of the first and of the other malefactor crucified with Jesus. But strangely, coming to Jesus last, though He was hanging in the midst of the two malefactors, they saw that He was dead already, and hence they broke not His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and, behold, forthwith came there out blood and water. John 19, 32—34; 20, 25—27. In that day the fountain seen in prophetic vision by Zechariah was opened. What a mysterious, passing strange fountain! (For the Hebrew words for fountain see Young's *Concordance.*) John, the apostle who witnessed the strange scene on Calvary, once more speaks of it in his first epistle, 5, 5—8. Jesus, the Son of God, came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood. And there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three witnesses agree perfectly. Note that Zechariah does not define the nature of this mysterious fountain flowing from Calvary's cross. He merely predicts: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," without stating *what* shall flow forth from the fountain. He states for whom this fountain is *primarily* intended — for the house of David, from whom Jesus came according to the flesh, Rom. 1, 3; 9, 5, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Acts 1, 8; Luke 24, 47, "*beginning* at Jerusalem." Zechariah also states the *purpose* of the fountain; "for sin and for uncleanness," *i. e.,* for the removal of these. (The version of the Hebrew Rabbis reads: "for purification and for sprinkling.") Note the use of these two expressions in Num. 19, especially v. 9, the chapter describing the deeply symbolic and significant ordinance of the red heifer. "Eleazar, the priest, shall take of her blood with his

finger and sprinkle of her blood directly before the Tabernacle of the congregation seven times." (V. 4.) "And a man that is [ceremonially] clean shall gather up the ashes of the burnt heifer and lay them up without the camp, . . . and it shall be kept . . . for a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." (V. 9.) See also v. 6. Thus, while Zechariah states the *primary* beneficiaries of the fountain and its blessed effects, he does not describe its nature. This is very significant in view of the many other passages in the Old Testament which speak of the fountain of living waters, *e. g.,* Jer. 2, 13; 17, 13. But you will note that two purposes are stated: "for sin and for uncleanness," for purification and for sprinkling.

In the Levitical ritual of Num. 19 and elsewhere we have the type of the water and the blood from Christ's riven side which flowed in clearest terms. a) The sacrifice is slain. b) The sprinkling (sevenfold = completeness) of the blood is typical of the complete and never-to-be repeated putting away of all sins *before God* through the shed blood of Christ. Heb. 9, 12—14, typical of the one sacrifice for sins forever, 10, 10—12, typical of the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, which cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1, 7. c) The cleansing from defilement, or uncleanness, by sprinkling with the water mingled with ashes is a type of the water which flowed from the side of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit, of His Baptism, and of His Word. John 7, 37—39; Eph. 5, 26; Titus 3, 4—7. The believer who has unintentionally sinned, Gal. 6, 1, remembering that the guilt of all sin has been atoned for by the sacrifice of Christ, judges and confesses his sin as defilement and is forgiven and cleansed, he is clean. John 13, 3—11; 1 John 1, 7—10. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." John 15, 3. If He, from whose side flowed blood and water, the double cure for sin, says to any one: "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," we may rest assured that such a one is clean through the words which are spoken to him. Matt. 9, 1—8. Verily, a mysterious fountain, the fountain that was opened there on Calvary! Foreordained before the foundation of the world, made manifest "in that day," in these last times for us, the foundation of the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Pet. 1, 19. 20. Cf. Luther's explanation of Second Article. What Luther means, that also Wm. Cowper intends when he sings: "There is a fountain filled with blood," etc. Stanza 1.

Not only Abraham and all the saints before the fountain was opened, rejoiced to see "that day," but also "the dying thief rejoiced to see," etc. Stanza 2. The mystery of this fountain is only heightened when we look at the water of Baptism, the washing of regeneration, Titus 3, 5, the sanctifying and cleansing washing of water by the word, Eph. 5, 26, the water, which is one of the three witnesses here on earth, 1 John 5, 8, the water mysteriously prefigured by the waters

of the Deluge, whereby the eight souls in the ark of Noah were saved and which now also saves us. 1 Pet. 3, 20. 21. And what shall we say of the mystery of this fountain as we are face to face with it in the Lord's Supper? "This is My blood of the New Testament," Matt. 26, 28, — as contrasted with the blood of the paschal lamb, under the Old Covenant, the blood of the Lamb of God, — "My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." And this mysterious fountain of the blood will continue to be one of the three witnesses here on earth, "till He come." 1 Cor. 11, 26; 1 John 5, 8. — Thus, in rapt devotion, beholding the mystery of this fountain, we cannot but worship with Thomas, saying: "My Lord and my God." John 20, 28. In our text chapter the Lord of hosts calls Jesus "the man that is My fellow." Zech. 13, 6. 7. Cf. Matt. 26, 31.

2.

Great, baffling, "passing all understanding," confounding all philosophy, with its "wise" conceits, is the mystery of this fountain. But what shall we say of the mysterious power of this fountain, drawn from Immanuel's veins? Ah, the greatness of its mysterious power is already suggested by the mystery of its nature.

A) Can you say sincerely and humbly: "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine"? Every sinner who has ever come to Jesus with such a confession has experienced the mystery of the power possessed by that fountain. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" John 1, 12. 13. And nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, nothing in hell, could shake them in their conviction that they are God's. "That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake." Such is Heaven's assurance to faith in this fountain.

B) Being justified by faith in this fountain, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace with God, for we have lost all our guilty stains through the atoning blood; all our sins are washed away by the cleansing streams of that mysterious fountain. Rom. 5, 1. And though our conscience, though the great Accuser, though men, assail us, yea, though the whole world rise up to condemn us, our faith is the victory which overcomes them all. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again." Rom. 8, 33. 34. The dying thief, what a triumphant faith he had in this foundation! On bended knee we join our poet in his adoration of Christ, directly communing with Him: "Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood," etc. Stanza 3.

As Eve, fashioned mysteriously, being taken out of Adam's side, is the mother of all living, Gen. 2, 21—23; 3, 20, so the water and the

blood flowing from Jesus' riven side has given new life, a new birth, to all believers from Adam's day to ours and will continue to have this power "till all the ransomed Church of God be saved to sin no more." Surely a marvelous power, which baffles all analysis, power to save all at all times, in all places, in any condition them that believe. "E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream," etc. Stanza 4. What perfectly beautiful lines!

C) Yes, the redeeming love which created that fountain has the power to restore in us the love to God, which we had lost through the first disobedience. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4, 10. And now "we love Him because He first loved us." V. 19. Yea, the love of Christ manifested in the fountain of the healing stream "constraineth us; because we thus judge . . . that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth," etc. 2 Cor. 5, 14. 15.

Picture for a moment the power of the love of Christ in Cowper's own case. Much straitened in means after his father's death, confined in a sanitarium, subject to fits of melancholy, often on the verge of hopelessness and despair, our poet, after 1763, was in a painfully pathetic condition from his thirty-second year onward to his sixty-ninth year, when he departed this poor life of his to be forever with the Lord. When we bear these sad facts of his career in mind, how much more wonderful his words sound!

"E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream," etc. Stanzas 4. 5. What wonderful "tranced adoration"! We seem to be in the land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign, and to hear the song of the redeemed: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins," etc. Rev. 1, 5. 6.

Meanwhile, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Quote Rom. 8, 38. 39. This love of Christ has power also to break down all hatred in our hearts toward our fellow-men, even toward our enemies. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 John 4, 11. 20.

Finally, the opened fountain has power to give us hope, hope which maketh not ashamed, a hope which is not blind, but which knows full well that, though now we see through a glass, darkly, then we shall see face to face; though now we know in part, then shall we know even as also we are known. 1 Cor. 13, 12. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness, Ps. 17, 15, and shall realize Thy promise: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Rev. 21, 6.

Such being the powers of the opened fountain to all believers, we ought all to say: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Mark 9, 24.

SPECIAL NOTES. — The first stanza of this hymn has been severely criticized, some considering the imagery gahstly, gruesome, etc. But any one who believes in the necessity of the atonement will understand the poet's meaning, just as he will understand the opposite extreme: *Dass auch ein Troepflein kleine die ganze Welt kann reine . . . machen.* How would one express the mystery of that fountain's unending "power to save"? Montgomery proposed this change: —

From Calvary's cross a fountain flows
Of water and of blood,
More healing than Bethesda's pool
Or famed Siloam's flood.

Do you prefer it to Cowper's? Dr. Moffatt says in the *Handbook to the Church Hymnary:* "The hymn must be taken as Cowper wrote it or not at all." He quotes Prof. Saintsbury to the effect that no finical or philistine dislike of the phraseology ought to blind any lover of poetry to the wonderful, tranced adoration of the movement of this hymn. Correct! As in many of Cowper's hymns, there are in this one some fine expressions of almost ecstatic religious fervor. — Also lines 3 and 4 of the second stanza have often been changed, but our hymnal gives the original. See 1 Tim. 1, 15. — The original hymn has two more stanzas, which however, are dropped in most hymnals: —

6. Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared,
Unworthy though I be,
For me a blood-bought, free reward,
A golden harp for me.

7. 'Tis strung and tuned for endless years
And formed by power divine
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other name but Thine.

"God Moves in a Mysterious Way" is another of his hymns given in our hymnal. "O for a Closer Walk with God," "Sometimes a Light Surprises," and his exquisitely tender "Hark, My Soul! It Is the Lord," on the words: "Lovest Thou Me?" John 21, 6, are all masterpieces of sacred poetry.

Finally, note how much later Lowell Mason's melody is than the hymn; yet it is the melody almost exclusively heard in America.

O. W. WISMAR.

SIX WORDS OF JESUS.

"Except Ye Repent, Ye Shall All Likewise Perish."

Luke 13, 1—5.*

Again and again it happens that the entire world is shocked by some frightful catastrophe. It may be an earthquake, such as we have had in San Francisco, a conflagration, as in Chicago and Baltimore, or a cyclone, such as visited St. Louis in 1896 and again in 1927; or it may be such a shipwreck as that of the *Titanic;* or,

* This sermon may be used after some calamity.

worst of all, it may be such a war as that which devastated Europe and engulfed even our own nation (1914—1918). History itself teaches that we may expect something of that kind at any time. The Bible expressly predicts that these disasters will come, and must come, before the greatest of them all, Judgment Day itself, comes. And yet people are stunned by such an occurrence. Every one's conscience is aroused. What does it mean? Editors comment upon it. Preachers preach about it. Is there a spiritual lesson or message? Our text supplies the answer.

Jesus' Instruction Concerning Great Calamities.

1. He warns against self-righteous condemnation of others.

A) Explain the occurrences mentioned in the text.

B) The natural thought and conscience of man at such times moves him to think of God's judgment upon sin, wrong and its punishment. That is right. All suffering, sickness, death, and especially also these great and sudden calamities, are evidences and demonstrations of God's wrath over sin. God does not punish innocent men. If man had remained sinless, there would have been no suffering, disease, death, no such calamities, but Paradise, health, happiness, and goodness. God wants you to think of sin and sin's consequences. Jesus does not say that those Galileans and those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners. They also had sin. Sin brings these disasters upon us. It is perfectly right, therefore, whenever we learn or hear of suffering and distress or of some catastrophe or painful visitation, that we think of sin. God wants to impress upon us such truths, *e. g.,* "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." Gal. 6, 7. "I also will laugh at your calamity." Prov. 1, 24—33. "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places." Ps. 73, 18—20. "The ax is laid unto the root of the trees." Matt. 3, 10. "Wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Rom. 2, 5—12; Matt. 25, 30; 23, 38; 25, 41. God blesses us so richly every day, lets His sun rise on the evil and on the good, that many begin to believe that He will not punish sin, that there is no eternal damnation. Then God sends such a fearful calamity to remind us that He will not be mocked, but that the impenitent sinner need expect nothing but wrath and tribulation.

C) However, we must guard against this error of believing that those who are stricken are sinners *above others.* It is true, at times God strikes down a bold sinner, and every one can see that such a one received the just reward of his wicked deeds. But let us keep in mind that many on this earth suffer because of the sins of others. When Jesus suffered, many thought that it was because of some wrong that He had done, even as the prophet declares: "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." But Jesus was wounded, not

for His own, but for our transgressions. Is. 53. And then there are mysterious visitations of God, which even His most beloved children suffer in order that they may demonstrate their faith, and courage, and hope, and perseverance in the midst of trial, *e. g.,* Job. Jesus therefore condemns those who, whenever they see any suffering, at once condemn the sufferer as having deserved, more than others, his misfortune. John 9, 1—3. In our text He very forcibly warns us against all self-righteous condemnation of others. How cruel and shameful to upbraid those who are in distress, to bring accusation against them at a time when they are most in need of comfort, as the friends of Job did! Those who do that invite God's wrath and punishment upon themselves. They are the very ones who are running right into disaster.

We should think of sin and that sin causes such visitations. Yes, but you are to think of *your own* sin.

2. Jesus tells us to repent.

That is the message which these calamities and all suffering and distress are to bring to you: Repent of your sin. Take to heart these earnest words of the Lord Jesus: "Except ye repent," etc.

A) Remember that before God there is no difference between you and the greatest of sinners. Rom. 3, 22. 23. By nature you are just as wicked as the men who hammered the nails through the hands of the Lord Jesus, just as wicked as Judas, who betrayed Christ. Indeed, you have no right to esteem yourself one whit better than the worst sinner who ever lived on this earth. God wants you to have the same mind which was in St. Paul, who called himself the chief of sinners. And do we not sing in the hymn: "The dying thief rejoiced to see," etc. Hymn 200, 2. When you sing that, do you know that that dying thief was one of the basest of mortals who ever moved on this earth? Sin is sin, and filth is filth. Your heart is no different from the heart of any one else, for out of your heart also proceed evil thoughts, etc., Matt. 15, 19. If you have not fallen into outward, disgraceful sins, it is the grace of God that has preserved you; or there may have been publicity and other things restraining you, even as a tiger is restrained in his cage, although he is as bloodthirsty as any wild beast roaming the jungles. Moreover, when we consider our Christian parents, our opportunities here in a Christian country; when we think of the means of grace, of our Christian associations, and all that has been done for us to rear us and to preserve us in the fear of God, all our sins and neglects are increased. Think also of this, that you profess those beautiful sentiments which we so frequently sing in our hymns "Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices," and yet you have complained bitterly against God's providence; Hymn 88, and you have longed to go with the world and to run in its wild courses; Hymn 91, and you have been ashamed of your faith

and have been silenced in your confession; Hymn 96, and you have refused to hear the name of Jesus and have gone elsewhere. You have sung Hymn 322, 4, and you have tried so hard to be like the world. You profess to love the Word of God, and yet you have neglected divine services and have felt a deep disinclination to go where it is proclaimed. You have hated your enemies, you have thirsted for revenge. You have nursed an unforgiving, bitter spirit. In God's sight you are filthy and unclean with all manner of sins. Not a day passes but you must confess: "We daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment." Therefore: "Except ye repent, ye will all likewise perish."

B) But what does it mean to repent? It certainly does not mean to continue in sin. He who falls from one transgression into ever greater transgressions, or lives on heedlessly in his wickedness, is certainly not repenting of his sin. Nor does it mean to despair in sin; for he who despairs in sin commits the greatest sin of all. By unbelief and by the rejection of God's grace such a one takes the course of Cain, Pharaoh, Saul, and Judas. To learn what repentance means, look at a truly repentant sinner. David, as he pictures himself in Psalm 51. Manasseh humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 2 Chron. 33, 12. Paul, Acts 9, 6. Peter, when he went out and wept bitterly.

A repentant sinner is one whom the Holy Spirit has enlightened to see his own sins and the wrath of God over them in the light of God's Word and judgments. He is pictured to us Luke 15, 17—19 and Luke 18, 13. In such a one, however, faith is always joined to contrition, even as David rejoiced in God's pardon, without which no one can be saved, Ps. 32; and as Paul gloried in grace, 1 Cor. 15, 10; 1 Tim. 1, 13; and as to-day all sincere Christians who approach the Lord's altar and sincerely and from the heart confess their sins and by faith accept the Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood.

Such contrition and faith will be followed by sincere godliness — love of God and His Word and love, patience, forgiveness, toward our neighbor. The battle against the devil, the world, and our flesh. Rom. 7, 14—25; Phil. 3, 13. 14. Hymn 50. S.

Joy in Heaven over One Sinner that Repenteth.

Luke 15, 10.

In the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's gospel we have three parables of Jesus, in each of which He impresses upon us the paramount importance of the salvation of the soul of man. Here are three pictures, by gazing upon which we are impressed and carried away with the fact that there can be no greater calamity than the loss of a human soul and that there can be no greater triumph than the salvation of a soul.

These truths are not antiquated.

Although it is nearly two thousand years since Jesus asked the question: "What is a man profited," etc.? Matt. 16, 26, still the world has not heeded His challenge. All about us men are playing with their earthly toys, trifles, which, like the tares of the field, flourish to-day and to-morrow are cast into the oven. Does not the press speak much of the achievements of man — wireless, aeroplane, deadly gases, etc.? If some foolhardy, desperate person promises to drop from a balloon by a parachute, multitudes will come for miles to see that man tempt God. But who is interested in saving souls? Aye, we Christians are in danger of being infected with this materialism and folly. The antitode for this poisonous atmosphere of worldliness is found here in our text.

The Repentance of a Sinner the Most Joyous and Most Important Event which Can Happen Here upon This Earth.

1. For when a sinner repents, a soul is saved from eternal damnation.

A) In order to visualize in a measure what that means, let us institute a weak comparison. Suppose your boy committed a crime and were sentenced to the penitentiary for life. Oh, horror of horrors! To think of that young man being kept behind iron bars, for all his life to be caged like a wild beast, to be treated worse than a slave, to be watched over by guards with guns, constantly in the society of the most depraved and corrupt.

That is a weak, a very weak, picture of eternal damnation. If such a poor criminal dies a Christian, he will step right from his horrors into the light of heaven.

Or think of those poor people who have lost their reason and must be confined in an asylum. How weird is that place of crazed intellects! How chilling and repulsive! How many a one has said, I would rather be in the grave than be in such a place! And yet there is hope. Some who have been there came out cured. But if an impenitent sinner dies, then he is lost forever, he dwells with devils and human fiends, "where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched," their minds forever torturing them, their bodies suffering torments, an abhorring to all flesh; amid weeping and gnashing of teeth the wail goes up: "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." And between them and the blessed there is a great gulf fixed, which they cannot pass "that would come from thence." What a terrible fate! God preserve us from it! Oh, if there is one living in sin, let him turn before it is too late, before those gates have closed upon him forever. "Sinners, turn, why will ye die?" etc. Hymn 48, 1. 2.

B) There is one thing which rescues the sinner from this fearful gloom, that is, repentance. No wonder there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, etc.; for if the sinner repents of his sin, then he faces about and goes toward heaven. By his sin the sinner has indeed deserved eternal damnation. But the repentance of a sinner means that the Holy Spirit through the Word has created in his heart the terrors of conscience and has created faith in the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. Repentance means that which happened to David, Ps. 51. Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33, 12. 13. The returning Jews, Ezra 9, 6. The keeper of the prison at Philippi. Paul. Peter. Such are washed, and their robes are made white. Is. 1, 18; Rev. 7, 17. And now Heaven smiles upon them. Ps. 16, 11. They can appropriate to themselves 1 Pet. 1, 3—5. Can there be anything greater, can there be anything more joyful? Text. Let us rejoice with them.

But there is another reason why the repentance of a sinner is a most joyous and most important event.

2. When a sinner repents, the image of God is renewed in him.

A) Man in the beginning was created in the image of God, righteous, truthful, pure, content, happy, and intelligent. What if men were still thus! Why, it is almost heaven itself to live with people who even approach that condition. But man is no longer thus. Instead of being intelligent, he is stupid and foolish. How much money we spend for education! Still every day the press reports the action of fools. Man is no longer righteous; he is sinful, wicked, and depraved. All literature speaks of it, the daily press reports it, our government officials proclaim it, our consciences accuse us, the very locks and keys on our doors betray it, our armies and navies and police forces testify to it. The most dangerous living being on this earth is not a tiger or a lion or a rattlesnake, but a man or a woman.

And man is no longer contented and happy. On every side we see man chasing after happiness without reaching it. Some are still hopeful and are still in the race. Others even now have a hell within their souls. Others are doing their utmost to find some philosophy or some poem or some saying to shed a little light into the gloom of their inner mind. What a wreck man is! Stupid, foolish, wicked, and unhappy, so that one of our poets has said: "Man never is, but always hopes, to be blessed." Such a person is accursed himself and a danger and daily sorrow to others.

B) But it can all be changed, and all that was lost through sin can be regained. How? Through repentance. Folly can be taken from the heart of the most foolish and wisdom given — the highest wisdom. Wickedness, depravity, and sin can be changed into righteousness. Discontent and unhappiness can be removed and in its stead given such joy that men and women will burst forth: "O that

I had a thousand voices!" How? Through repentance. Can there be anything greater and more joyous than to give man that happiness again which he lost through sin? If the image of God is restored to us, then — text.

It is true, this image of God is not restored perfectly here on this earth, but a beginning is made, and even this beginning is of great value. At one time, when my duties towards a lost sheep called me into the court of criminal correction, where, on a Monday morning, the criminals of the last few days were gathered, oh, what a company, what faces, what language, what an atmosphere I met there! That same day, in the evening, I attended a Sunday-school teachers' meeting. How different! That experience seemed to me to be a step from hell to heaven. Even the beginning of the renewal of the image of God is the best thing that can happen to us here on this earth; and what will it be in heaven? Ps. 17, 15. "Satisfied!" Do you mean to tell me that there is no difference between a soul filled with satanic passion and a soul in which dwells the Holy Spirit? Blessed are they who repent of their sins; the angels of heaven rejoice over them. What a fool the prodigal son was when he left his father's home, when he wasted his goods with riotous living! How blessed when he rested on his father's bosom! Are you resting there?

And yet there is one more thing that must be mentioned.

3. The Bible tells us that the angels of God are interested in the work which Jesus came to do.

And why did Jesus come? He came to save that which was lost. Matt. 18, 11. When God became a man, He came not to do some trifle, He came to do the most blessed work that can be accomplished here on this earth. — And every time a sinner repents, His cross is bearing fruit.

Do you know what it means to sacrifice, and to suffer, and to wait, and to hope, and to pray, and then finally to see results? When the English fought to take Quebec from the French on September 13, 1759, John James Wolfe, although he was sick in body and had fought to exhaustion in many a former campaign, led the attack, worked and spoke, encouraged and fought, until he was bathed in sweat. He was wounded, and his men urged him to leave the field; but he continued to fight, he continued to work. He was wounded again, and again his friends implored him to spare himself, but he paid neither attention to the sweat, nor to the blood, nor to the wound, nor to the pain, nor to the toil; he labored on, he fought on. For the third time he was wounded, a bullet passed through his lungs. He seemed to be fainting away in death, when some one shouted, "They run! How they run!" He rallied for a moment and asked, "Who is running?" and his aide-de-camp answered: "The enemy is running. We have won a glorious victory." Then John Wolfe lay back and

said: "God be praised! Now I die in peace." Although it meant death to himself, the success of his cause gave him peace and joy. But what are the labors, sacrifices, and sufferings of all heroes and all martyrs compared with the suffering of that Lamb of God who died upon the accursed tree of the cross? He labored for all, He labored for you and for me. No sinner so vile but this Savior took upon Himself the very vileness of his sins, burdened Himself with all the burdens of earth, with all its cares and all its shame and all its sorrow. See Him sinking in the Garden of Gethsemane! That is not a weak man; that is the God-man, sinking under the burden of the world, under your burden and under my burden. Hear Him pray: "Father, if it be possible, take this cup from Me." All the sorrows of earth and of hell were in that cup. No wonder that even the God-man trembled while He drank it. See Him upon the cross, laboring and agonizing for our souls. Hymn 209, 1. 2.

Did anything come from that suffering? Was there any fruit? Every time a sinner repents, the Lamb is reaping a harvest. Is. 53, 11. 12. No wonder: Text. Hymn 48, 4 and 46, 3. S.

"He that Believeth and is Baptized Shall be Saved."

Mark 16, 15. 16.

Sin is never a trifle, but always a very serious matter. A fool makes light of sin. Prov. 14, 29. One single sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit, brought all suffering and all damnation upon our whole race.

And yet there is a difference between sin and sin. A sin of weakness, where one is beset by a sudden and powerful temptation, differs from the sin of wilfully despising God's Word and continuing in transgression. Peter fell heedlessly; Judas carefully planned and premeditated his wickedness. Men recognize this distinction, but few judge rightly of it. The great majority of men, for instance, think lightly of unbelief. The statements made in our text have therefore ever been an offense to the world, even to the most respectable of this world. Even we Christians must admit that such thoughts arise in our hearts as, Why should unbelief, the fact that a man cannot accept the wonderful facts stated in the Scripture — why should that be such a fearful sin? And why should faith, simple, childlike acceptance of the miraculous narratives of Holy Writ — why should that entitle a man to heaven? Let us dwell upon this subject and give the Holy Spirit through this very word an opportunity again to impress these important truths upon us. Let us ask and answer from Scripture these two questions: —

1. *Why is unbelief such a damnable sin?*
2. *Why is it that faith alone saves?*

1.

Our text plainly states: "He that believeth not shall be damned." And we are not left in doubt as to what men are to believe, for, immediately preceding this statement, we have the command: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Unbelief in the Gospel and refusal to believe the Gospel-message, that will bring upon the unbeliever suffering and distress here upon earth and finally eternal, irreparable damnation. And there is absolutely not the least injustice in this, for He who is Truth, Justice, and Righteousness itself is determined to bring the most severe punishment in time and eternity upon every unbeliever because of his unbelief. For: —

A) Remember that God is a spirit and that all our obedience has worth in His sight only as it is a sincere obedience of the heart and of the spirit. It is foolish to think that God is especially concerned about our external behavior. It is true, there are ceremonies, actions, and external manners which we observe especially because of our fellow-men, which also have worth before God if they are the expression of what we feel in our hearts. However, a hypocrite may externally act very well and seem most devout, but he does not offer to God the sacrifices of the heart. Unbelief is a sin of the heart. It refuses to accept God's Word, even though it comes to us in that very way in which God wants it to come to us; in short, unbelief calls God a liar to His face. 1 John 5, 10. God has both spoken to us and revealed Himself and His will, and He has spoken in such a plain and distinct, unmistakable, manner that thereby light comes even to the most simple. Ps. 119, 130. Let the unbeliever say what he will, give any excuse that he may invent, after all, his unbelief means just this, that he calls God a liar to His face. The unbeliever, instead of saying: "I am too wicked, too foolish, too blind, too ignorant, I do not want to see the truth," rather accuses God and declares that God has not made His truth plain, that God's miracles are not sufficiently convincing. Thus, in the days of Jesus, men were not satisfied with any miracle which He performed, but they required others. They wanted Him to come down from the cross; they wanted Him to have bread rain from heaven. Therefore: Matt. 12, 39.

B) Unbelief is such a damnable sin because it prevents all genuine good works among men. Before any one can do anything that pleases God, He must, first of all, have faith. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. 14, 23. And: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. 11, 6. Therefore an unbeliever may do what he will, if his actions are not a fruit of his faith, his life is detestable and hateful to God. By faith alone the Holy Spirit enters the heart and moves us to love our neighbor, to love God, to serve our neighbor, and truly to live to the glory of God. An unbeliever, though apparently he live ever so righteously, soberly, and

wisely, is in God's sight even as that criminal who is robbing a bank in the most skilful, adroit, and successful manner. We admire his skill, but we condemn his act. And just so the unbeliever who is using the natural powers of self-control and of good judgment in order to live a selfish life cannot please God, but is treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. Indeed, the respectable unbeliever is almost a greater hindrance to good works than the open and profligate sinner; for every slave of open vice is an argument in favor of the Church and of faith, but every unbeliever who lives a worldly blameless life is a great offense to thousands of others. By one foul swoop unbelief takes heaven, hell, Christ, God, Gospel, and Sacraments from the hearts and minds of people and turns men into hard-hearted, selfish idolaters. The Pharisees and scribes seemed very respectable without faith; in the end, however, their unbelief caused them to crucify Christ. The same is true of Pilate. It was Pharaoh's unbelief that made him an enemy of God's people. Herod's unbelief made him a murderer of infants. Unbelief is not only the noxious seed of a hateful brood of vipers, but it is also the blight which prevents the fruits of faith.

C) But worst of all, unbelief is such a damnable sin because it even refuses the grace and help of God. Man is a sinner. His entire nature is corrupt, Ps. 51, 5. Through disobedience and unbelief he lost Paradise, but now God has provided salvation for him, the Gospel of which our text speaks, which is to be preached to every creature. God has provided His oxen and fatlings, all is now ready; we need but come and partake of this heavenly feast. But unbelief refuses this; therefore the unbeliever remains in his sin, loses the blessings which God had intended for him, which Jesus bought at an enormous price. O what folly! What sin, what fearful guilt, does unbelief heap upon itself! Such unbelief caused Jesus to weep over Jerusalem and to say: "Ye would not." If one through his own wickedness heaps misfortune upon himself, that is bad; but to refuse help is worse. Unbelief damns the sinner because it refuses the pardon and forgiveness of God provided in Christ Jesus, the Savior of the world. If any sin, therefore, is worthy of punishment, unbelief is more so, for it is the cause of all other sins. If any sin is worthy of punishment, unbelief is more so, for it prevents the salvation of the sinner.

God, therefore, is perfectly justified in saying: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

2.

Now hear the counterpart: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." You see, the most respectable person, the most kind and loving person, if he believes not, is damned. But the greatest sinner, if he believes, is saved. Why is that?

A) First and foremost, because by faith alone we can accept the forgiveness of sin which God offers to all in His Word. Let us remember again, — for that is fundamental, — "For all have sinned," etc. Rom. 3, 22. 23. It is with mankind just as it is with a lot of little children who have fallen into the mire. There may be some difference in the degree of uncleanness, but, after all, they all need cleansing and washing. Just so all sinners need forgiveness. And forgiveness is provided through Christ's suffering and death. 1 John 1, 7. It is offered in the Word of promise, and this offer can be accepted in no other way than through faith. In the very nature of things you can accept God's forgiveness in no other way than by believing it. And God has also told us that expressly in any number of places, *e. g.,* John 3, 16; Rom. 3, 28. To argue against this or the justice of it is just as foolish as for a man who has worn himself out with work and has been underfed, and for whom the doctor advises rest and food, to insist that work is more deserving than rest and eating. The doctor would soon tell such a one, Yes, but for you there is no other way than resting and eating. The first thing for every sinful man and woman on this earth, if they wish to be saved, is to come as poor, repentant sinners before God and to accept His pardon by faith. For by faith we lay hold upon the righteousness of Christ's suffering and death and make them our own. By faith we become children of God and are adopted into His family.

Faith therefore saves us, not because it is such a good work, not because of its intrinsic merit, not because thereby we can make up for our transgressions, not because it pleases God more than other works, but because in the very nature of things, according to God's own Word, there is no other way of appropriating to ourselves the very forgiveness and pardon of God which we all need. Therefore faith, and faith alone, saves.

B) But remember also that through this faith the Holy Spirit enters our hearts. Gal. 3, 2. And by this Holy Spirit are produced those beautiful fruits of righteousness mentioned. Gal. 5, 22. 23. There is no other way of getting a childlike heart towards God and willingness to walk in His ways than through faith in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3, 26. Not only are we adopted as children of God, but the Spirit of God's Son enters our hearts, so that we willingly and cheerfully do His will. Faith is the seed from which all holiness, goodness, and godliness of life proceeds.

C) Faith also is the power by which we are sustained in this Christian life, by which we gain victory after victory from sin, misfortune, sorrow, temptation, and even death. 1 John 5, 4. (Here insert some of the victories of God's children as recorded in Heb. 11.) And here remember that faith is not our own work, but is God's work in us. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 26, 29. Summarize. S.

"I Am the Vine; Ye Are the Branches."

John 15, 5.

Paul told the Corinthians that all his preaching had but one theme, Jesus Christ, the Crucified. He did not mean to say that he would not speak of anything else. In fact, he did speak of many other things and persons — Abraham, David, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Sinai, circumcision, and any number of other subjects, doctrines, and persons. Paul meant that all that he said was said for the purpose of proclaiming to men Jesus Christ, the Crucified. And that must ever remain the purpose of our preaching. But will not this subject become trite and tiresome? Not at all. For a true, penitent sinner there is no subject more delightful than that concerning the Savior. Moreover, this subject is also inexhaustible. (The unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. 3, 8.) Indeed, we are in need of knowing more of Christ, meditating upon Him, speaking of Him, so that Christ may be formed in us, Gal. 4, 19, and that it may be true of every one of us what the apostle says of himself: "For me to live is Christ." Therefore, etc.: —

"I Am the Vine; Ye Are the Branches."

1. Christ is the Source and Fountain of our spiritual life.
2. He makes us fruitful in holiness and good works.

1.

A) "I am the Vine; ye are the branches," picture to us the vital connection between the branches and the vine in a vineyard. The branches could have no life if they were not in the vine; they derive all their life from the vine. So it is with the spiritual life of the Christian. A Christian is not simply a decent, respectable person. A Christian is one who has been awakened to see the curse and wickedness of his own sin and who has, amid the pain and distress of contrition, laid hold of God's offer of grace in Christ Jesus, the Savior of sinners, *e. g.,* the keeper of the prison at Philippi, Lydia of Thyatira, the first Christians at Jerusalem, etc. This faith of the Christian is not merely an intention of leading a better life. It is a pauper's finding of that great pearl of priceless value. Matt. 13, 46. It is finding the fountain by one afflicted with an incurable disease, filthy and repulsive. Zech. 13, 1. It is the return of the prodigal. This faith is always based upon Jesus' blood and righteousness. 1 John 1, 7. Through this faith a vital connection is brought about between the believer and the Savior. Thereby we become one with Christ. Eph. 2, 15. 16; 5, 30. This faith in Christ's redemption is the only thing which establishes a vital connection between the believer and the Savior, the branch and the Vine.

Is that the connection between you and your Savior?

B) This connection and relation is not one like the union be-

tween one metal and the other, which may be fused and mechanically or chemically joined and then ever remain joined, forming a new substance. It is the relation between the branch and the vine, through which the very life of the branch is continually supplied from the vine. This distinction is of great importance to the Christian. When we are grafted into the Vine, when we become Christians, then, indeed, a blessed, vital relation is established. But this relation is one which is to be sustained, nourished, and protected. In other places of Scripture this beginning of a new spiritual life in the branches by being grafted into the Vine is called the new birth. Now, when a child is born into the world, well and good. But this new life must be sustained, nourished, protected. And so it is with your faith, which unites you with Christ. Your faith is not like a ten-dollar gold piece, which you may receive for once and put away in a safe place, where it may be found at any time, no more, no less, in value than when it was received. No, your relation to Christ is a vital relation. There have been branches which have died and lost all their value, become worthless, and have been cut off and cast away. John 15, 6.

C) How is this nourishment of our spiritual life to be taken care of? We must ever remain in close contact with Christ, and that is done alone through keeping close to His Word, for in and through His Word Christ is near us and comes to us. It was this Word which gave us spiritual life, 1 Pet. 1, 23, and it is this Word which sustains faith and the spiritual life. Therefore, v. 7: "and My words abide in you." Paul wished to visit the Roman Christians, not only that he might preach the Gospel there and win others to Christ, but also that through this Word he might impart unto them, who were Christians, spiritual gifts, *to the end that they might be established.* Rom. 1, 11. Therefore Jesus calls His words "spirit and life," John 6, 63, because thereby spiritual life is continually sustained, nourished, strengthened, and developed.

Let us never forget this, that just as no man can come to Christ without the Gospel, Rom. 10, 14, just so it is impossible to continue in Christ without the Gospel. Gal. 3, 3. Just as a fire will die down and go out if it is not continually supplied with material for new life, so our faith and spiritual life will die if we are not continually hearing, reading, considering, Christ's Word and Gospel. Let us therefore be diligent in this occupation, praying Christ that He may through His Word support our spiritual life.

2.

But our text also points out to us this other truth, that from Christ we Christians receive strength to bear good fruits, that is, to live a holy, God-pleasing life and to bring forth good works. Our text tells us: "Without Me ye can do nothing," but "he that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

A) These fruits are the good works, which demonstrate the new life which is within us. They are the fruits of holiness. We must distinguish between these good works of the Christian and the apparent good works that we often see in unbelievers, Jews, and pagans. There have been heathen unbelievers and modern Jews who have done much for mankind. There may be unbelieving parents who support their children, show them love and kindness in many things, are obedient citizens of the state, hold high office, and use their splendid natural gifts in the service of mankind, but all this goodness of one who does not accept Christ as his Savior is based upon selfishness, self-righteousness, vainglory, or is the outflow of a certain natural goodness, which, however, in God's sight is all vitiated by the rejection of His grace. No, the good works of a Christian are not such external products of a self-centered life, which is in reality corruption before God. Nor are these good works of the Christian the fruits of the fear of punishment and a desire to gain a reward, such as we see in many persons who seem very religious, but who are mere sons of the Law, Ishmaels, that is, persons who do right from a mercenary spirit, with the intention of avoiding penalties and gaining rewards. Good order and proper behavior one may find even among hardened criminals, and may find it there in a higher degree than among children of God. No, the spiritual fruits of the Christian are those works which the Spirit of Christ in them produces. In a healthy child there need be very little encouragement to action, the action is there; such a child is full of motion and is ever in action. Just so the faith also which unites us with Christ and produces the spiritual life within us is not a dead, motionless thing, but is living and moving and is continually active and doing good works before it is told and without being told. The new man in us, which was given to us in the new birth, the new life in us, which we received when we, as branches, were grafted into the Vine, Christ, is continually exerting itself to please God and to serve the neighbor. The life of the Christian is not that of the legalist, who is driven by fear and is whipped up by legal enactments and legal drivings. No; "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5, 17. It is a delightful thing to be able to say with St. Paul: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1, 21. And again: "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2, 20. Just as it is a delightful thing to have in our very nature a strong vitality that moves us to do our daily tasks with joy, so, and much more, is it a spiritual joy for the Christian to be busy about his heavenly Father's business. He has the inner urge that moves him to say with Christ: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." John 4, 34. We Christians are not to be pitied that we are under obligation to separate ourselves from the world and its wickedness, to support Christian churches and schools, to be faithful husbands, wives, parents, and children, to read the Bible, to attend

Holy Communion, to help our fellow-men by supporting the orphan, the widow, and daily to live a godly life, struggle against the devil, the world, and the flesh. According to the new man all these things are not burdensome to us, but are the very joy of our lives. It is our very meat and drink. We only wish that we could do more. We should like to have a thousand voices. Hymn 62. According to our new nature these things are not burdensome to us, but they are the very light of our lives. Therefore we rejoice in them continually. Phil. 4, 4.

B) Therefore also our good works are in no wise meritorious, because they are the blessings which proceed from the Vine, Christ, and come to us without any merit or worthiness of our own. Could a branch which because of the life supplied by the vine bears rich fruit demand that it be rewarded for this? Certainly not! We, as branches, ought to be thankful, for Christ supplies us with strength, life, and opportunity to bear rich fruit. Just as little as any one of us should ask a reward because his eyesight is good, or because his digestion is good, or because his hearing is good, or because he has been preserved from paralysis or other serious sicknesses, just so little should any Christian bearing richest fruit demand a reward. Did Abraham, did David, did Paul, did Luther demand to be rewarded because God supplied them so richly with His grace and gave them such excellent opportunities to do their great and holy works? Indeed not. They were thankful for God's grace. St. Paul rejoiced that the grace of God which he had received was not in vain, but enabled him to labor more than they all; however, he added at once that it was not he that labored, but the grace of God which was with him. 1 Cor. 15, 10. The nation at the end of the year, when the harvest has been brought in, does not declare: Now the weather has been fine, there has been the proper proportion of sunshine and rain, we have had rich soil, and the crops have been plentiful, therefore we shall now come before God and ask our reward. No; they come before God to render thanks for all these gifts of His. So we Christians, if we are supplied with spiritual life and Christ lives in us by faith, are not to become proud and self-righteous and demand rewards, Matt. 19, 27, but we should give thanks that God has counted us worthy to serve Him, has given us spiritual gifts and opportunities to use them. Acts 5, 41; 1 Tim. 1, 12.

Let us therefore from this text learn to look with enlightened eyes upon the spiritual life of the Christian. Let us seek to have this life nourished and strengthened within us by keeping close to Christ and His Word, knowing that without Him we can do nothing. Let us ask Him that He may purge us in order that we bring forth ever more good fruit; and when He gives us opportunity, strength, and means to do these good works, let us thank Him for it. S.

"Ye Are the Salt of the Earth."

Matt. 5, 13.

Who are the most important people on this earth? Who?

To-day the newspapers may offer you one answer, but if the world stands long enough, there will be a different story to tell. Rameses or Moses? Goliath or David? Herod or Jesus? John 1, 26. Henry Tudor or Martin Luther?

Not a mere curious question, but one of the utmost importance to all of us right here and now. Of all who live with us to-day, who are the most important people? Jesus tells us in our text.

"Ye Are the Salt of the Earth."

1. To whom are these words addressed?

a) Jesus said this to His disciples, to those who accepted Him as the Messiah of Israel and as their Teacher, Savior, and Lord.

b) But since Jesus came, not only for the men of that age, but for all men (Luke 2, 10; John 17, 20), He intended to address them to all His disciples for all ages to come. Therefore these words are preserved and printed.

Who, then, is a true disciple of Jesus? Not the workers of iniquity, who live impenitently in all manner of sin. Matt. 21, 33—41; Luke 13, 27. Nor the hypocrites. Matt. 23, 27—31. Nor the self-righteous. Luke 18, 11—14. But the penitent sinner. Luke 18, 13; Ps. 51; Ps. 32. The believer. John 3, 16; Phil. 3, 8. The sincere follower of Jesus. Phil. 3, 12. 13.

Are you such a one?

2. Why does Jesus call them the salt of the earth?

a) Because the world is corrupt and decaying. Is. 1, 4—6; Rom. 1, 21—32; 2, 11—13; Eph. 2, 1—3.

The Christians are to stay and prevent the decay. That is the purpose of salt. Salt does not exist for itself, but is used to preserve food that would otherwise decay. So the Christian is to counteract the corruption of this world. Morals are becoming worse and worse — the daily press is full of the decay of morals. The police restrain outward actions only, cart away the garbage. Prison, gallows, morgue. But we Christians are to purify and save, to wit, by the Word which we preach, teach, and spread. (All church-work; spreading of the Bible; truly Christian literature.) Abraham was such a salt; Jacob; Joseph.

By our lives as true Christians in home, school, business, state, we ought contantly to exert a wholesome influence. We ought to be the best husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, etc.

b) Salt makes food palatable and savory. Job 6, 6. "Salt is good," Mark 9, 50. So we ought to make life worth while and delightful to

others. The Bible and its teachers have blazed the trail for all progress in genuine science, medicine, learning, schools, art, society, charity. Even atheists prefer a Christian community to one of criminals and degenerates. Churches and Christian schools season all life. Let us see to it that it is good for men to be with us. Matt. 17, 4; Phil. 1, 4—8; 1 Thess. 3, 7 (and context).

c) Salt was required for all sacrifices. Lev. 2, 13. No sacrifice was acceptable to God without it. Just so we Christians ought to stand in the gap and make up the hedge for the world. Ezek. 22, 30; Gen. 18, 32; 30, 27.

This world is still standing for the sake of the Christians in it. No prayer is acceptable to God but the prayer of Christians.

But if the salt lose its savor, *i. e.*, if the Christian be such in name only, then he will perish with the world. Let us therefore strive to enter in at the strait gate. Be separate from the world. Be a real salt, even though many hate and persecute us for it.

Then, whether the world acknowledge it or not, we are people of the greatest, most abiding, and most wholesome influence. S.

"Teach All Nations, Baptizing Them."

Matt. 28, 12—20.

This church is known as an Evangelical Lutheran church. Its members are called Lutherans. Most, if not all, in this audience are Lutherans. Why? Why are we Lutherans? We ought to be able to give reasons. 1 Pet. 3, 15; Matt. 10, 32. Our text shall guide us as we answer the question: —

Why Am I a Lutheran?

1. Because the Lutheran Church makes disciples of Christ by proclaiming the Gospel.

The Lutheran Church preaches the Gospel. V. 19. Explain connection between "teaching" (*matheteusate*) and "preach the Gospel" (*keryxate to euangelion*). Thereby I have been made a Christian. Rom. 10, 17.

The Lutheran Church administers the Sacraments according to Christ's command. V. 19.

God Himself, through the preaching of the Lutheran Church and through the Sacraments, has drawn me to Himself and has preserved me as His child. Thus He has made me not only a Lutheran, but, first and foremost, a member of Christ. John 6, 44; 12, 32; 1 Cor. 15, 10. Thus I became a Lutheran. God made me one through His Word.

We say this not in pride or because we esteem ourselves better than others, but in grateful recognition of God's grace, as did St. Paul.

2. Because the Lutheran Church recognizes the one and only Lord.

V. 18. There is only One who has all power and authority in the Church. Deut. 18, 15; Matt. 11, 2—6; 23, 8; Mark 1, 11; Matt. 17, 5; John 12, 48; 14, 6; 10, 5.

The Lutheran Church recognizes this one and only Lord. No synod or bishop above this Lord. In this Church I am permitted and privileged to serve this Lord alone. Therefore I am a Lutheran.

3. Because the Lutheran Church teaches ALL *things whatsoever Christ has commanded.*

A) Not fables, not science and men's notions, but whatsoever Christ has commanded. 2 Pet. 1, 16. The faithful Lutheran Church restricts its preaching to "whatsoever," etc. V. 20. Medicine, literature, etc., I learn from others; God's Word from my Church.

B) Jesus does not only want the Church to preach those truths of the Bible which we specifically call the Gospel in the restricted sense (Second Article), but all things of His Word. V. 20; Acts 20, 20. 27; 1 Cor. 1, 5—7. (Here select some few specifically Lutheran teachings which are important for your people, *e. g.,* Sacrament of Altar, Baptism, Justification, etc., and show by Scriptural proof that our teaching is Christ's teaching.)

Conclusion. — Admonition to remain faithful. Rev. 20, 10. Hymn 408. S.

SIX GREAT PROMISES OF GOD.

Water of Life for the Thirsty.

John 4, 13. 14.

Refer to series. (There is something fascinating about a series of sermons.) Remarkable that God should make a promise to us unworthy creatures. What shall we say, then, when we note that God's Book literally teems with gracious promises? If this were not true, we should be groping about without the hope of salvation which we now entertain. The coming weeks shall rivet our attention upon six selected great divine promises. (Wherever possible, the themes should be announced on neatly printed card.) Refer briefly to the themes. To-day: —

Water of Life for the Thirsty.

This promise was *spoken by our Savior at Jacob's Well.* On His journey to Galilee, Jesus passed through Samaria. Tired, hungry, thirsty, He sat down at Jacob's Well (why so called, John 4, 12). Located near Sychar. Disciples sent to city to purchase supplies. The truly human Christ had need of these things; also water, v. 7 (see chap. 19, 28); also rest, v. 6; Luke 8, 23.

This promise was *spoken to a Samaritan woman.* She came to well to draw water. Bible silent as to her name. We simply know that she dwelt at Sychar. But we know something of her character. That indicates why there may as well be silence. An immoral character, an adulteress. V. 18. Such people in dire need of such a promise. That explains fact that Jesus should converse with her. He sought sinners to save them. Matt. 18, 11; 9, 12. Faultfinding enemies, of course, would raise objections and make insinuations, Luke 15, 2; but neither the sinfulness of the woman, nor the barrier of nationality (v. 9), nor the bitterness of malicious insinuations kept Christ from seeking opportunities to offer salvation to poor sinners.

This promise *shows folly of seeking the quenching of thirst in earthly waters.* Bear in mind that Jesus is dealing with a sinner and must convince her of the folly mentioned. Natural man seeks highest joy in earthly things. They are like waters from this well. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Borne out by experience; hence remarkable illustration. Highest earthly joy does not last. Greatest temporal possessions cannot fully satisfy. The most thorough secular knowledge falls short of the vital issue of salvation. The most conscientious efforts at salvation by works are rewarded by an unquenchable thirst. — Bear in mind that Jesus during conversation exposes sin of this woman. That's why He started with conversation about water. Savior knew so well how to start and then turn the conversation. Wanted this woman to realize greatness of sin. Vv. 18. 29.

This promise *speaks of water which Christ gives.* Though He had first requested, He now offers to bestow. That is the very matter which Jesus wanted to drive home. At first He told her: "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Oh, how this must have aroused her curiosity and her eagerness to know! Focused attention upon self as one able to give something better than she could offer. Nothing temporal, but that which comes from Him who is extraordinary, who gives "living water." — He *gives* it. There is nothing which man can do to acquire it. Merely accept the gift. Twice Jesus says: "The water that I shall *give* him." — He *is* the Water. John 7, 37. He is the Giver and the Gift, though He seems to be asking for a gift. — We need to stress to-day as much as ever that living water is God's gift of grace. Man can do nothing to dig this well, to locate this spring, to draw this water. Jesus, by suffering and death, dug the well, opened the fountain, and God the Holy Spirit now brings and offers the "living water." Viewed from whatever angle we desire, the living water is a "gift." "During a great famine in India a merchant succeeded in obtaining a supply of bread. He offered it for sale at

a very reasonable price, but no one had any money. He reduced the price. Even then the starving people said with tears in their eyes: 'We cannot buy at that price, for we do not possess even a penny.' Moved with sympathy, he then offered a loaf to every one gratis. How eagerly and thankfully the hungry accepted the gift!" (*Day by Day with Jesus.*) We have nothing to prepare or to procure the "living water." It must be a gift of grace.

This promise *speaks of water which really quenches thirst.* Jesus says: "shall never thirst." This water far above the natural; yes, it is extraordinary; but surely substantiated by the experience of all Christians. Christ satisfies the troubled conscience, the heart seeking assurance of forgiveness, the longing for lasting joy and happiness, the craving of the soul to be at peace with God, etc. The poor penitent who comes to the fountain of God's grace in Christ Jesus has his thirst quenched for time and eternity. The burdened cross-bearer comes to Jesus and finds full satisfaction in Him. The sorely tempted find in Him that strength which satisfies. The dying who must pass through the dark valley fear nothing, "fear no evil"; for He is with them, His rod and staff comfort them. Absolute satisfaction in every emergency of life.

This promise *speaks of water which produces a fountain of water within* — "shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." As the well is fed by the spring in order that it may supply water to the thirsty, so the Christian is supplied by Christ with "living water" that this may "spring up." Note Christ's "in him." The Christian carries it around with him. Becomes part of him. Always there to be used. Bestows continual strength. Even in face of sorrows which surround him. Christian like besieged city. Enemy cannot cut off water supply. The well in the city is fed by the hidden underground channels, which obtain their supplies from the springs of the distant mountains. — Note "springing up." Water rises to its level. That's why the well is filled to a certain level. So the "living water" which Christ gives "springs up." There is activity, no stagnation. By its own inward energy this water produces activity, as the flowing water of the spring is active. This activity is not forced, so that it becomes drudgery; it is willing and delightful service. Christian cannot be stagnant. Inward energy exerts itself outwardly. Faith in Christ bears fruit. "Living water" influences whole life and conduct. Good works must follow faith. Even malefactor on cross confessed Christ, silenced his former partner in crime, pronounced Jesus innocent before multitude that had crucified Him, prayed for grace, suffered patiently, etc. — Note "into everlasting life." That is the source. Water came from heaven. It seeks that level. Not that the Christian now earns heaven by activity. Remember all is a "gift" and the life-giving energy of this "living water" is Christ Himself.

Have you tasted this water? Is your thirst quenched? Is there a spring of water in you? There for you, due to gracious efforts of Jesus. There is an abundance, a spring, of living water, which never ceases to flow. Come and drink by faith in Christ!

J. W. BEHNKEN.

Deliverance for the Troubled.

Psalm 91, 14—16.

Psalm 91 has often been read by and to the troubled. Good reason for it. Just the word for cross-bearing children of God. Sweetest comfort and assurance of security for God's people in those hours of life of which we would say according to the flesh, "I have no pleasure in them." Eccl. 12, 1. For to-day focus attention upon last verses. May Spirit of God attend us as we consider —

Deliverance for the Troubled.

This promise is *made to such as know His name.* To know name of God is equivalent to knowing God. Only way we have of knowing God is by the names which He has revealed in His Word. Ps. 48, 10. They who know name of God have learned to know Him as only true God. All others are idols, who cannot be of any comfort and consolation in hour of trouble. Their names meaningless or else inspiring hope which is not fulfilled. God exactly what name expresses. To know God means to believe what Bible has revealed about Him, to trust in Him. John 17, 3.

This promise is *made to such as have set their love upon Him.* Such love follows knowledge and faith. Christian reasoning: 1 John 4, 19. An example, Asaph. Ps. 73, 25. 26. Christian knows that God has commanded this. It is the greatest commandment. Matt. 22, 38. This love manifests itself in willing service to God. John 14, 23, also v. 15. This includes forsaking sin and following after holiness. This love manifests itself also in love to neighbor. This is commanded in second table of Law. See 1 John 4, 20—21, also v. 11. This love should be fervent. God with whole heart, neighbor as self. Must not wane. Rev. 2, 4. 5.

This promise is *made to such as pray.* "He shall call upon Me." Prayer certain to follow love. Does child love father if it refuses to speak to father? Must not Christian speak of God? The electric light in your home connected with dynamo at power-house. Otherwise no light. Christian must be in connection with God. God speaks to us through Word, we to God through prayer.

This promise *declares that God will set believer on high.* "On high" is out of reach of danger. Destructive flood-waters cannot reach the mountain peak. "He shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." Is. 33, 16. Illustrate by picture of "Rock

of Ages." Angry and furious waves rage turbulently, but they cannot swallow woman who clings to rock. — This surely true in spiritual troubles. In Christ fullest security. But also true in temporal troubles. When God sets us on high, no danger any more.

This promise *declares that He will be with believer in trouble.* Little child walking in dark with father takes hold of father's hand. Feels secure when convinced that father is near. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us," said Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They felt that God was with them and felt secure. "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee," said Darius to Daniel, hoping that God would be with Daniel. Daniel himself doubted it not for a moment and felt secure. Think of disciples on stormy Galilean Sea. They were so fortunate that Jesus was with them. Think of David's feeling of security even in face of death, as expressed Ps. 23, 4. The reason: "For Thou art with me." We are safe when God is with us.

This promise *embodies deliverance out of trouble.* Great security to have God with us, but promise includes that God will remove trouble from us or us from trouble. "I will deliver him," says text. This nothing less than that He will put an end to trouble or lift us away from it, so that raging trouble cannot touch us. Some say this is too much, because against laws of nature. Often God uses laws of nature to provide deliverance. But God can also effect deliverance contrary to laws of nature. Examples: Fire could not harm three men in the fiery furnace. — Lions did not devour Daniel. — Bolted prison doors did not hinder deliverance of Peter. — Feet in the stocks, in the inner prison, did not prevent deliverance of Paul and Silas. — Angels appeared from heaven to deliver Lot and his family. — Pillar of cloud and of fire prevented the mighty army of Pharaoh from capturing defenseless Israel. — The waters of the Red Sea must divide to provide safe passage for Israel and must rush together to devour the hosts of Pharaoh.

This promise *assures answer to prayer.* "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him." What if you had assurance from mighty ruler that your request will not be in vain? Here God gives twofold assurance: "I will deliver thee," "I will answer him." Prayer, if sent to proper address, namely, to the true God, never in vain, always heard. Prayer will set omnipotence of God into motion. Will surely achieve results. When God says: "I will answer him," He means that He will help and give that which has been asked or something better. 2 Cor. 12, 9.

This promise *includes honor.* Fact that God should consider us at all, and even offer help in our distress, is honor. Think how humble citizen would feel honored if the President were to come to his home to provide help. Here God offers help to miserable sinner. We

say with David: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" But God honors also before others. He will grant success. He will raise people to positions of honor. Marvelous that God should do so much for us!

This promise *speaks of the granting of a long, satisfied life.* "With long life will I satisfy him." Long life ever considered a blessing. God has added the promise of a long life to Fourth Commandment to make children all the more eager to honor father and mother. God means this, as examples show. Joseph permitted to be second to Pharaoh for many decades (perhaps eighty years). David. Solomon. Note "satisfy." God promises more than long life. Will make it such a life that person is satisfied, a life of joy and happiness and satisfaction. Think of Ruth or of St. John. What a wonderful life did God grant to them!

This promise *reaches climax in the showing of salvation.* Salvation can be obtained only through Christ. He earned it. Enormous cost. We must be brought to see our salvation in Christ. Seeing by faith. In that manner Abraham saw God's salvation. John 8, 56. Jacob waited for it. Gen. 49, 18. Simeon was granted the privilege to behold the infant Christ with bodily eyes; but, better still, he saw Him with eyes of faith: "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared." Luke 2, 30. Nothing grander and better than to be shown salvation. That is deliverance from the worst of all trouble — sin, death, power of devil, eternal damnation.

Have you experienced God's deliverance? You have been in trouble or will be. Turn to Lord and rely upon His glorious promise. Turn to the good heavenly Father, who was willing to sacrifice own Son that real deliverance might be provided for you.

J. W. BEHNKEN.

Strengthening for the Weak.

Is. 42, 3.

God's wonderful promises cover every emergency of life. Examples of it. In series we are touching a number of these. For to-day we speak of God's promises to the weak. Weakness is a sorry plight. True of physical, mental, spiritual weakness. God has something splendid to say to the weak. May God bless our mediation as we consider —

Strengthening for the Weak.

This promise *speaks of Christ's doing.* The 42d chapter of Isaiah undoubtedly speaks of the office of Jesus Christ. "My Servant," "Mine Elect," "in whom My soul delighteth," "I have put My Spirit upon Him," expressions, in v. 1, which show that Christ is meant. Prophet foresees wonderful work which Jesus should ac-

complish. We are sure of this. Read Matt. 12, 17—21. These words applied to the work of Jesus. Fact that it is Christ's doing is of great importance. It must be of great consequence, of real benefit, if He does it.

This promise *speaks of Him who deals mercifully.* In foregoing verse: "He shall not cry nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." Matthew says (Matt. 12, 19): "shall not strive." His dealings not rough, not indifferent, but merciful and gentle. In fullest harmony with Christ's person and work. During whole ministry Christ's anger seldom aroused. Tone of voice never harsh, even when speaking to enemies who sought to entrap Him, especially kind when dealing with the unfortunate and penitent. Through Gospel He still deals mercifully with us. How earnest, yet how tender, toward Nicodemus! John 3.

This promise *sets forth His conduct toward the weak.* Not merely the physically weak, though also these children of His receive His special care. Text speaks of "bruised reed." Thin, slender, canelike growth. Slightest blow will bruise it. Animal walking by and rubbing against it bruises it. If left to itself, will die. Note "the smoking flax." Wick in lamp. When oil supply is low, flame about to go out. Before last flicker it begins to smoke. If left to itself, will go out altogether. Both of these splendid illustrations represent the spiritually weak. Bruises caused by sin. Spirit willing to live right, but flesh weak. Matt. 26, 41; Rom. 7, 15—24. Common experience among Christians. Bruises caused by God's Law, which points out sin. Rom. 7, 7—13. Terrible condition of a man who realizes guilt may be seen in any person whom God's Law exposes. Law a relentless and ruthless accuser. Bruises caused by voice of conscience. Rom. 2, 15. Lashing of guilty conscience causes terrible bruises. No relief, no escape. Go whithersoever you will, it is there to speak in unmistakable accents. People seek to drown it or administer all manner of opiates, but always comes back all the more forcibly. Causes sleepless nights, restless days, suspicious conduct. Has forced the hardest and most cruel among men to break and to confess. Like heavy hammer, strikes one telling blow after another. It bruises and crushes people. Worst of all, it drives men to brink of despair. Example, Luther before God gave him understanding of word "The just shall live by faith." Bruises caused by doubts and temptations. Devil assails Christians to deprive them of certainty of forgiveness and salvation. Instils doubt whether they are really Christians. Wants them to despair of God's ability to help. Example, disciples on stormy sea. Disciples when Jesus asked: "Whence shall we buy bread?" etc. Read Mark 9, 14—24.

This promise *assures us that Christ gives special attention to weak.* Text speaks negatively: "shall He not break," "shall He not quench."

Does not weaken, but rather emphasizes force of promise. "Not break" means that He will not destroy it because so weak that it is worthless. "Not quench" means that He will not extinguish it because it is burning so low as to be worthless and not able to furnish light. Negative statement has positive message which is in full harmony with actions of Christ. You can take a bruised reed, treat it, tie it up, and it will heal and grow strong. If you add oil to lamp with smoking flax, it will soon burn bright again. So Jesus will give special attention to the weak in faith. Need special attention and also get it. The Lord urges us to give special attention to the weak. See Acts 20, 35; Rom. 14, 1; 15, 1; 1 Thess. 5, 14. He will not merely ask it of us, but do it Himself. Started His ministry by reminding people that this is His purpose. Luke 4, 16—21. His wonderful dealings with the weak and troubled during His ministry furnish sufficient proof. Jesus gives special attention to the weak to-day. They need it so much more than strong. Wants weak faith to grow. 2 Cor. 10, 15; 2 Thess. 1, 3. Hence God wants us to use His Word. 1 Pet. 2, 2. For that purpose He has also given the Sacraments. Weak Christians should make diligent use of Lord's Supper.

This promise *is based upon absolute certainty.* Isaiah foretold of the coming Christ: "He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." The very purpose of Christ's coming, the strengthening which He had for the weak, the merciful and gracious treatment which He had for the broken-hearted, must needs be established. He must furnish evidence that this is truth. Jesus did this. Practically every miracle which Jesus performed "brought forth judgment unto truth." To accomplish this, Christ resorted to no earthly power. He had no armies, no soldiers, no weapons and ammunition to enforce His will. He came and preached the Gospel. Claimed to be Son of God and Savior. Substantiated this claim by undeniable miracles. Quietly and convincingly this worked upon hearts of people. They felt constrained to admit that He spake the truth. Though so different from others who established kingdoms, though He came in lowliness, Matt. 21, 5, yet men had to acknowledge that Christ spake the truth. — Now, remember that He came to establish kingdom, though not of this world, John 18, 37, yet wonderfully glorious. In it the weak become strong. 1 Cor. 1, 26—28. See what He made of Peter, of Mary, Luke 1, 28. 48, of Paul, 1 Cor. 15, 9. 10. — Since Christ's real purpose was to benefit the weak, and since He is the true Christ, as He has proved, we are certain of the promise which Isaiah has presented unto us Is. 1, 18.

Do you ever feel weakness of faith? Are you ever beset by doubts and misgivings? Look unto Christ and His glorious promises for just such as you are. Mark 9, 24. J. W. BEHNKEN.

Protection for the Oppressed.

Is. 54, 17.

Some of the nations of the earth have acted as protectors of weaker nations. This has led even to serious complications, to war and bloodshed. Our war against Spain of such a nature. What assurance for weaker nations! — God's "little flock" carries the assurance that God's protecting hand is stretched out over them. Need have no fear. Luke 12, 32. Text presents one of the glorious promises of God for the oppressed. As the Spirit of God guides us, let us focus our attention on —

Protection for the Oppressed.

This promise *presupposes oppression.* There is nothing more certain than oppression for Christians, sometimes more, sometimes less severe. Christians must expect it. Christ experienced it. His ministry had hardly begun when opposition arose. At first cleansing of Temple, Jews asked for a sign showing His authority (they wanted credentials). John 2, 18. Nicodemus came under cover of night for fear of the Jews. Must have been enmity at that time. Later on this enmity grew more bitter. Sought to entrap Christ to have Him put to death. (Several instances.) Even picked up stones to kill Him. John 10, 31. Accused Him of doing His work by power of devil. Matt. 12, 24—27. Show how enmity grew ever more bitter until Christ was riveted to cross. (Point out the merciless, bloodthirsty demands made to Pilate; satisfied with nothing less than crucifixion and the shocking mockery and blasphemy on Golgotha.) Surely Jesus experienced oppression. — Jesus foretold oppression for His followers. Matt. 10, 17; 24, 9; Luke 21, 12—17; John 15, 19. 20; 16, 2; 2 Tim. 3, 12. Christians are to be prepared for it. Nothing strange whatever may befall them. — The disciples soon felt and experienced the truth of Christ's prophecy. Examples: Peter and John imprisoned; Stephen stoned; James put to death. — Persecutions of the Christians during the first few centuries. Church to-day has its oppression. Not always persecution by force. Poisonous darts of ridicule and mockery hurt terribly. Think of attacks made against faithful confessors in Russia and China during recent years. — Not anything strange. Nature of Gospel not only to convert, but also to arouse opposition and hatred. Luke 2, 34.

This promise *mentions the nature of the oppression which Christians must endure.* Text: "weapon that is formed against thee." Refers to persecution by force. This substantiated by history. Christ's complaint: Matt. 23, 37. Stephen's accusation: Acts 7, 51—53. Experience of early Church: fire, sword, wild animals. Experience during and after Reformation: Spanish Inquisition, Massacre of St. Bartholomew, persecution of the Huguenots, etc. (See

Conc. Encycl., p. 580.) — What is true of the persecution of the whole Church holds true also with regard to persecution of individuals. Many a person who confessed faith in Christ has been forced to pay the costs of it. — Text: "every tongue that shall rise against thee." Refers to persecution by the lashings which tongue inflicts. History shows that evil tongues were always busy against Christians. If anything went wrong, Christians were blamed. As evil tongues were busy against Christ, so also against His followers. Mention also attacks against Church by Modernists. — This also true of sins of tongue against individual Christians. This perhaps most frequent manifestation of oppression to-day. Still many Absaloms who are ready to slander the Davids. Here take the opportunity to point out sins against Eighth Commandment in as far as they apply to oppression of God's people.

This promise *informs the oppressors that their efforts are in vain.* The forger of weapons shall not prosper. Means, on the one hand, that he shall not accomplish wicked purpose. Will not be able to effect the destruction desired. Weapons may be artfully designed, perfectly forged, expertly handled, accurately aimed, yet shall miss the mark entirely. Means, on the other hand, that he shall not meet with success. No blessings on such wickedness. His evil schemes eventually result in inglorious defeat. Hand which handles weapons of oppression wages losing fight; in fact, such weapons act like a boomerang. They strike him who uses them. — The tongue which rises against them in judgment shall be condemned by them. It may seem to do damage. It may rise up, but it will be like a balloon which is soon punctured. The desired effect will not materialize. Yes, their false charges will be answered. Christians' best defense is the Word of God. Effective defense against such enemies is also a truly godly life. 1 Pet. 2, 15. 16. — Also attacks of Modernists upon the Christian Church must crumble. In Christ's day the modernistic Pharisees (they taught doctrines similar to what present-day Modernists teach) did not succeed. Their bitterness against Christ failed utterly to accomplish intended purpose. True, nailed Him to cross, but see Acts 2, 23. 24. 32. To-day the bitterness of Modernists has but driven Christians into a deeper study of the Word of God. Christ's truth and doctrine triumph. Matt. 16, 18; Num. 23, 23.

This promise *assures security to those who are attacked.* Whole text impresses this truth upon us. Bear in mind that God promises this. His promise yea and amen. As sure as though already fulfilled. Reason for saying this: God's almighty hand offers the security. He will withstand the weapons of attack for us. He will silence the tongues which would condemn us. Note: Enemy shall not succeed. That can mean nothing else than security for those who are attacked. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8, 31. 32. If God is

for us, enemies' attacks must result in collapse. Our security is based upon protection which God will provide. Jude 14. 15; Ps. 36, 5. 6. Example: Goliath, with all his strength, could not succeed when the Lord was with David. The Syrian hosts could not harm Elisha because God was with him. 2 Kings 6, 8—23.

This promise *assures victory in days of oppression.* Oppression of Christians and attacks made upon them make their life a warfare. Bible uses such expressions as "wrestle," "fight," "resist." But the Christians' warfare is a winning fight. Christ has already vanquished the foe. Victory is ahead. The Christian cause must stand. Text: "Thou shalt condemn."

This promise *reminds us that protection is a free gift.* Note: Text calls this the "heritage" of the servants of the Lord. The Lord has prepared it for them. It comes from Him. None of our own efforts play any part in it. This emphasizes its being a free gift. True in every way, whether we think of righteousness as the righteousness which Jesus earned for us by His perfect fulfilment of Law and atonement for all our sin and guilt, or whether, as seems more in harmony with the context, we think here of the righteousness of our cause against our enemies. As to latter, God provides the weapons, the strength, the courage, the ability, the victory. God sent Christ to conquer Satan and sin. God conquers the temporal enemies for us. We are fighting a winning fight as a result of God's efforts. The protection given us is His gift.

What protection do you seek in days of oppression? Remember the good Lord, who conquered worst oppressor and gives us the victory over him (Satan), offers protection also against other oppressors. Turn to Him for protection. J. W. Behnken.

The Comforter for the Church.

John 14, 26.

Disciples fortunate when Jesus was with them. Did not realize it fully. Did not understand Christ's true aim and purpose. But Jesus always there to teach them. This relationship would end. Visible presence would be withdrawn. Who would teach them? The Savior made this His concern. He would provide. Informed disciples of what would happen after His withdrawal. Promised the sending of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn our attention, under God's gracious guidance, to this glorious promise: —

The Comforter for the Church.

This promise *was made at a most solemn moment.* Jesus had celebrated last passover with the disciples. This was followed by institution of Lord's Supper. All of this must have filled disciples with awe. What does it all mean? Next was the walk to Gethsemane.

Text a part of those intimate words spoken to disciples. Where were they spoken? Some claim in hall where Sacrament was instituted, others claim on way to Gethsemane. Cannot be definitely determined. In either case the solemnity is emphasized. All the more true since Jesus knew definitely what was in store for Him. Stood on brink of chasm of deepest humiliation. That very night the horrors of Gethsemane's indescribable suffering. The next day the excruciating pains of the crown of thorns, the lashes of the scourge, the nail-wounds on the cross. A little deeper thought of the serious moments through which Jesus passed will impress fact that promise was spoken at a most solemn moment. Becomes all the more remarkable when you consider that Jesus was forgetful of self at that moment and thought of disciples' future comfort.

This promise *was made to sad, but unwary disciples.* Could not grasp meaning of simplest statements of truth. Matt. 16, 21—23; Mark 9, 9. 10; 10, 31. 32; Luke 9, 44. 45; 18, 34; John 12, 16; 14, 5—9; 16, 6. 17. 18; 20, 9; Acts 1, 6. Not due to mere sadness, but to wrong conception of Christ's kingdom. Idea of earthly kingdom deeply imbedded in mind. Thought of suffering, death, and resurrection did not fit into their conception of great earthly glory. They were on eve of fulfilment of Messianic prophecies, but did not appreciate the meaning of it, nor estimate the seriousness of the whole situation. Little realized the dangers which confronted them nor their unpreparedness.

This promise *assures wonderful comfort for hours of sadness.* Sadness was coming. Shepherd slain, sheep scattered. Like sudden thunderstorm would this break in upon them. Little did they realize that night that Gethsemane would bring sore testing for them. Master led away captive, they left to themselves, — the very thought of it filled them with sudden fear and cowardice. Horrors breaking in upon Christ might strike them. No one able to describe the sadness of disciples after Christ's death. Sadness of women, forgetting large stone; the remarks of disciples on way to Emmaus; action of Thomas; give us a few glimpses into the realities of sorrow, well-nigh despair, which had enveloped them. But Jesus promised Comforter against that hour. Look at history of fulfilment. Disciples on day of Pentecost — note especially all lack of fear, the courage and the boldness with which they faced multitude, the fearless sermon, the charge against the Jews, the positive declaration of Christ's resurrection, the demand for repentance, etc. It surely took courage to deliver those sermons recorded in Acts 2 and 3. No doubt, disciples were fully comforted.

This promise *assures the gift of the Holy Ghost from the Father in Jesus' name.* Jesus brings out these two truths: "from the Father" and "in My name." We have here a passage which emphasizes harmony between Father and Son. All carefully planned

from eternity. Father must send, but it must be done in Jesus' name. The Father's gift, but earned by the Son. Here an opportunity to stress fact that all blessings which come to us from Father are such as He can bestow only because Jesus suffered and died for us. This removed the barrier between us and God, made it possible for God to adopt us as children, enabled God to bestow all grace upon us.

This promise *definitely outlines the work of the Holy Spirit.* "He shall teach you all things." They were in sore need of instruction. True, they had heard, but had been such dull pupils, so slow to understand. Comforter would enlighten them. Would open their understanding. Would lead them into fuller meaning and realization and realities. Note that, after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, they understood so well that they taught others. The Comforter wrought an astounding change in these men. Disciples were thoroughly indoctrinated by His "teaching." "Shall bring things to your remembrance." In reality the work of the Spirit is not something new. No new teaching, no new revelation. Jesus says: "He shall not speak of Himself"; "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive Mine and shall show it unto you." John 16, 13. 14. Jesus makes this all the more emphatic when He says: "Whatsoever I have said unto you." Just in those truths which are essential features of Christ's kingdom the disciples manifested so little understanding. Just in them must there be a "bringing to remembrance." History of fulfilment shows that disciples, who had been so biased and prejudiced in their conception of things, were reminded by the Spirit of God of the very things which Jesus had taught, and now they understood. Examine the things which they taught, and you will find that they were the things which they had heard of Jesus.

This promise *includes all children of God.* Original statement of promise was made to the Eleven (Judas Iscariot not with them when these words were spoken). However, the promise includes all disciples. The Spirit of God to-day given to disciples. He comes in Gospel and Sacraments and works at hearts of people. He calls to repentance. Heb. 3, 7. He causes men to say that Jesus is the Lord. 1 Cor. 12, 3. He brings about the justification of the sinner. 1 Cor. 6, 11. He dwells within God's children. 1 Cor. 3, 16. He gives power to the Word. 1 Thess. 1, 5. He works fruit within the heart of believers. Eph. 5, 9. He strengthens the believers. Eph. 3, 16. He is the assurance that Christ abides in us. 1 John 3, 24. He sanctifies us. 1 Pet. 1, 2. He engenders hope within us. Gal. 5, 5. All of these things are done in all believers, and thus He is our true Comforter. *Luther:* "Calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

Have you enjoyed the wonderful work of the Comforter? Do you permit Him to teach and to remind you? Does He effect work of sanctification in you?

J. W. BEHNKEN.

Eternal Life for Jesus' Sheep.

John 10, 27. 28.

Coming to close of series on selected great promises. Recall the different topics. Surely, God has graciously promised some great and remarkable blessings. Appropriate that we close this series with the promise of eternal life. May the Spirit of God guide us in our meditation on the promise of —

Eternal Life for Jesus' Sheep.

This promise *is made to a very definitely defined class of people.* "My sheep." Whom does Jesus mean? Could be very briefly stated, but profitable to enter upon more thorough consideration. Jews thought that this meant them. They boasted of being chosen people, Abraham's children. At the time He called Himself the Good Shepherd, Jesus told Jews: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." Evidently "other sheep" there denotes all believers from among the Gentiles. Apostles, when Jews rejected Gospel, turned to Gentiles. Acts 18, 4—6; 28, 28; 13, 46—48. "My sheep" includes even persons of a wicked past. Can there be any worse man than Philippian jailer? He mistreated his charges. Acts 16, 24. He was ready to despair and to commit suicide. Acts 16, 27. He was an extremely rough, selfish, hardened character, yet, by the preaching of Paul and Silas, he became one of Christ's sheep that very night. Could there be any worse character than that profligate in Corinth? Paul had to take congregation to account and say: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 5. Yet the Gospel was able to win this adulterer. Read 2 Cor. 2. Think here of the countless numbers who have been rescued from life of vice and crime and shame and disgrace and won for Christ, thus becoming "His sheep." To all who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ, regardless of what they may have been in the past, this promise is made.

This promise *is based upon definite knowledge.* "I know them." First of all, this statement means that He is well able to determine who the true believers are. Omniscient Son of God and looks into hearts. None can deceive Him. Nor is there any believer, though hidden from sight of men, whom He does not see. However, this also means that He is thoroughly acquainted with the needs and wants of every individual sheep. Most intimate knowledge. Note the comparison which Jesus makes in verse 15 to illustrate this fact. The relationship between Him and the Father most intimate. Surely know one another most thoroughly. Again, know one another in perfect love. Much comfort in fact that Jesus knows His sheep in love, perfect love, love based upon fact that He laid down His life for the sheep. Jesus' love becomes all the more apparent when you bear in mind that He had full power over His own life. Vv. 17. 18.

Though He had power over life, He was willing to lay it down out of love to Father and to His sheep. This thought enhances the value of happenings on Golgotha, but it also emphasizes the statement: "I know them."

This promise *reveals some characteristics of Christ's sheep.* "My sheep hear My voice." To understand correctly must study relationship between Oriental shepherd and his sheep. When all flocks are together, the shepherd calls his sheep, and they know his voice. The voice of the stranger is not noticed. How true of Christ's sheep! In the world they live together with all manner of people. Hear all manner of voices of such as pose as shepherds and really call them, but they know the voice of Jesus. Are acquainted with His Word. They know the genuine Gospel. Will not permit another gospel to be brought them, no matter who offers it. Gal. 1, 6—9; Rev. 2, 6; 2, 14. 15; 3, 9. Another thought: They will really hear Word of Jesus. Will not miss opportunities to attend services, to read the Bible, etc. — "They follow Me." Again, study the relationship between sheep and shepherd in the Orient. In our country shepherd drives his sheep, there he leads them. They follow. Would under no condition follow a stranger. How true of Christ's sheep! They follow Him. Not merely believe His Word, but strive to fashion their lives according to it. Strive to follow Christ's example. More than this, the sheep know Christ in love. That which He did for them is mighty motive to manifest love to Him. They know Him without fear. Sheep may run from stranger, but not from own shepherd. Know Him in fullest confidence, realizing fullest security with Him even when dangers are near. Sheep remain unconcerned about dangers when they are in the fold and shepherd is near.

This promise *offers a most wonderful blessing.* "Eternal life" says Jesus. Shepherd's interest in His sheep extends beyond the narrow confines of our earthly need. That blissful condition which human language cannot adequately describe, 1 John 3, 2; 2 Cor. 12, 4, of which God's Word has given us a few glimpses, Ps. 16, 11; John 17, 24, which make it so inviting and attractive, which will be overwhelmingly glorious, Rom. 8, 18; Rev. 21. See Catechism, Qu. 205.

This promise *speaks of eternal life as a gift of Jesus.* "I give unto them." Christ speaks as though He had full authority. Surely has. He earned heaven. Paid the staggering price of His suffering and death. After fulfilling every demand of God's Law perfectly for us, Jesus even atoned for all guilt of all men of all time which the Lord had placed upon Him. Is. 53, 4—6; 2 Cor. 5, 21. No doubt that He has authority to give. — Again, this certainly discountenances every thought of earning heaven. Natural man would earn heaven. Christ says, "I give them."

This promise *declares that a terrific effort will be made to thwart God's plan.* "Pluck them." There will be enemies who will strive hard to deprive Christians of that wonderful blessing. No doubt that devil is busy at this. He has busied himself with this very thing ever since he fell away from God. Dragged Adam and Eve into sin. Tried to destroy the God-sent Savior. Matt. 4, 1—11. Here consider also the extraordinary effort in Christ's day to possess the bodies of men. Think of effort of the devil during Christ's great suffering — entered Judas heart, sifted Peter, prompted the blasphemous mockery on Golgotha. Think of fearful temptations with which he confronts people to-day. John 8, 44; 1 Pet. 5, 8. 9. Think of what he did to Job. Chap. 2. Has strong allies. The world eager to help him. Matt. 18, 6. 7; Prov. 1, 10; Mark 4, 17; 1 John 2, 15—17. Sinful flesh right in harmony. Jas. 1, 13. 14; Rom. 7, 18—23; 8, 7. 8; Gal. 5, 17; 6, 8. Mighty and subtle attacks to deprive believer of eternal life. Requires greater ability and power than man possesses to prevent this "plucking."

This promise *assures perfect security in face of these attacks.* "Neither shall any man pluck them." "They shall never perish." Though enemies are bent upon the destruction of His sheep, they shall not accomplish purpose. All of their efforts fruitless. Sheep too securely held. "Out of My hand." Sheep are in Christ's hands. He almighty. Mightiest attacks can be repelled. He can, yea, has overcome all the enemies. He will keep them in faith to the end. 1 Pet. 1, 5; Phil. 1, 6; 4, 7; Jude 24. He is with them in final hour. Ps. 23, 4. He sends His angels to carry their souls to heaven. Luke 16, 22. Surely this should afford perfect security.

Do you enjoy this promise of Christ? Are you one of His sheep? Do you appreciate the blessings which it brings? Do you experience His protection? Are you hopeful of His gift? Are you looking forward to preservation unto eternal life? J. W. Behnken.

SPECIAL SERVICES.

Reunion of Former Catechumens.

Heb. 11, 24—26.

One of America's most famous statesmen, Daniel Webster, orator, jurist, humble Christian, once said: "If we work upon marble, it will perish; if on brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal souls and imbue them with principles, with the just fear of God and love of our fellowmen, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity." That is what your Church is striving to do and what it has accomplished in a measure in your lives. For all of you who are assembled here with truly believing hearts are monuments to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Living epistles, 2 Cor. 3, 2. Esau sold birthright for mess of pottage, despising promise of Savior for poor morsel, which at best appeased hunger for a few short hours. Cain shed brother's blood to quench flare of anger. First parents put Eden and image of God in jeopardy — and actually lost both — to satisfy craving for one taste of forbidden fruit. Child may surrender chain of priceless pearls for toy balloon, that will burst to-morrow. You have made better choice, set higher goal; you have said: "Jesus, Thou art mine forever," etc. (Hymn 97, 1.) Mary, Luke 10, 42. Moses in text; difficult choice, but chose aright. Illustrious example.

The Christian's Choice.

1. What the world has to offer; 2. What the Church has to offer; 3. What our choice must ever be.

1.

Fortune had been kind to Moses. Men called him the son of Pharaoh's daughter, v. 24, and surrounded him with very tempting opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, v. 25. We shall understand meaning of these phrases if we lift veil of the past and take glimpse at Egypt's ancient glory. First stable government. Pyramids already old when Moses was born. Magnificent temples built on so large a scale that our modern cathedrals would be dwarfed beside them. Mighty Pharaohs reigning over period of nearly thirty dynasties. Hundred thousand laborers working on one project. Signs of culture still evident; fine arts; advanced mathematics; medicine. Wonderful things found in tombs. Shrine of Tut-ankh-amen opened in November, 1925. Royal diadem on head, refined taste displayed in much of the jewelry, rings, bracelets, necklace, pectorals of elaborate encrusted *cloisonné* work, apron in sections of inlaid gold, girdles, amulets, sandals of gold. Boulders of tombs finely chiseled and fitted together. Power by which blocks of granite weighing thousands of tons were transported a mystery. Secret of embalming and preserving dead buried beneath sands of Egypt. Under Rameses II, sup-

posedly the Pharaoh of the oppression, Egypt at height of riches and glory. Moses adopted, grandson of king; born leader that he was, possible aspirations for throne. Surrounded by sovereign splendor, walked in palaces, massive columns, mural paintings. Private tutors, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," Acts 7, 22. Courtiers, fan-bearers, servants, eager to please. On every hand tinseled pleasures of the world, feasting, pride, extravagance, sensual delights, over which men forget God and lose their souls.

What has the world to offer to-day? Exactly what it offered Moses, though not always on as grand a scale. Alluring thing to become a favorite son and have opportunity to enjoy pleasures of sin for a season. Land of unparalleled opportunities. Mad race for fame, riches, power. Lure of gold and luxuries it can buy. Appeal of knowledge and all it can achieve. Thrill of success and flatteries it brings. Powerful organizations, popular heroes, moving-picture idols, beauty parades; temples of pleasure thronged day and night. Amusements calculated to inflame lust of eyes, flesh, pride of life. Millions attracted, as the little black Argentine ants are irresistibly drawn to the honey spread out for them, though it be freighted with arsenic; for a little season there is feasting, but the next day they are gone — the dying have carried the dead away. — And so, beloved friends and former catechumens, offers of world beset you daily who have come to years. Unearned advancement, compromising deals, glitter of wealth, thirst for knowledge, desire to be popular, call of carnal pleasures, printed poison, way of least resistance, forgetfulness of God.

2.

Over against all this, what has the Church to offer? Of what Church was Moses a member? One of the Hebrews by birth and circumcision. "The people of God," v. 25. Joseph forgotten. People oppressed by taskmasters; sons slain. Touching story of Moses' infancy, Ex. 2: found in basket by daughter of Pharaoh, nursed by own mother, who instructed him; from her he imbibed faith of the fathers. Never forgot early training. No temple of God in Goshen. Bible not yet written. No visible record of Enoch, Noah, Abraham. But God's word spoken from mouth of elders. Otherwise only poverty and irksome bondage. But the great "I Am" lived on in hearts of His people. "By faith," v. 24, they looked forward in hope for deliverance, not only from bondage of Egypt, but from greater slavery of sin and death, through the Messiah, "Christ," v. 26. Nothing true Church of that day could offer son of Pharaoh's daughter: no earthly advantage, no pomp, no splendor, no honor, no carnal enjoyment; only "affliction," v. 24, "reproach," v. 26, poverty, shame, scorn, smoldering hope of a distant redemption, based on unwritten Word of God.

True Church of to-day has little more to offer. Guardian of same invisible treasure. Its fairest gems, faith, hope, charity, set in crown

of humility and truth. Children laid in heavenly Father's arms by simple rite of Baptism. Chief concern: Feed lambs and sheep of Jesus; know Good Shepherd; follow Him on narrow way past pitfalls of world; be true to trust; faithful to end; hope for crown of life from Savior's hand. A little flock, Luke 12, 32; little to show in comparison with this world's temples of business and pleasure. Equipment of houses of worship rarely of best; servants of Christ poorly rewarded; work of Church often frowned on; motives impugned; sacrifices belittled; ideals called into question. Our beloved Church in particular often singled out for attack because it will not budge from the Word of God, tries honestly to be salt of the earth, draws line at dance-halls and theaters with their shameful exhibitions of immodesty, Prov. 5, 20, will not be yoked together with unbelievers, not take part in unionistic services, not solicit funds for its work from those without. Christians in other denominations sorely troubled by Modernists, Liberalists, destructive critics, who do not build, but tear down, ridicule faith, strike crutches from weak. — But we live in hope. Day of redemption draweth nigh. Numbered with people of God. His promises stand sure. By faith we visit forsaken whom crowds pass by, preach Gospel to sin-sick world. Christ lives on in warm, pulsing heart of Church of true believers.

3.

Your choice? Already made. Faith kindled in your hearts by Holy Spirit. You have tasted love of Christ. You no longer want to be blinded by offers of world. Christ has overcome world, John 16, 33; you victors with Him. Look back to confirmation with tear of gratitude. Like Moses, renounced pomp, vanities, poisoned atmosphere, excesses of world. Rejoice over every sacrifice ever made for Jesus' sake in these your best years. No evidence that Egyptians urged Moses to worship their idols, but the danger was there. He could not keep silence, could not bear to be a partner to their haughty, vain, impenitent lives. So he made the great renunciation, refusing one day definitely and firmly to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Came out from among them. Chose rags for riches, a lowly, thatched cottage for a royal palace, the reproach of Christ for the treasures in Egypt, reunion with his people for the glories of the house of Rameses and Mineptah. "What a fool he is!" men said. But see what God made of him: the deliverer of His people, the lawgiver of the ages, a prophet like unto Christ. Moses and Elias on Mount of Transfiguration; but where were proud Egyptians who had died after a life in pleasures of sin?

True, courage of battle-field necessary in choice of right against wrong. But Christ chose us, John 15, 16; in strength of that choice we must in gratitude choose Him. First loved us, we must love Him. Found us, we must confess Him. Died for us, we must live for Him.

Difference between Moses and churchman who spent some time in lumber camp. Asked on return: "How did you get along with the lumberjacks? Did they make sport of you for being a Christian?" he answered: "They didn't find it out." Difference between Moses and those who live in dangerous borderland, trying to serve both Church and world, to look half-heartedly at Crucified One while enjoying pleasures of sin for a season. How escape? Heb. 2, 3. David, rather doorkeeper, etc. Ps. 84, 10. Joshua: "As for me," etc. Josh. 24, 15. Luther: "Here I stand," etc. World a bog over which we must pass; skip lightly over it; if we stop or hesitate, we sink. The Christian's choice with Christ, His Word, His people; life-giving stream in desert; luxurious green and precious fruit wherever His resources are tapped; but beyond lie endless wastes of famished souls — spiritual and eternal death.

Fortunately world no monopoly on gold. God may bless labors of His own people so that they have more than wicked; and they use it to better purposes. — World no monopoly on education. Page over history, science — many illustrious names of Christians. Ps. 111, 10. — World no monopoly on popularity. Why fear criticism if God be for you? Sweet fellowship of saints, even under cross. — World no monopoly on true enjoyments. Home ties; joy of salvation; common hope of heaven; recompense of the reward, v. 26. What a blessed choice the Christian's choice! "Eye hath not seen," etc. 1 Cor. 2, 9. Your presence here evidence in measure that you love Him, His people, His Word, His house. "If ye continue," etc. John 8, 31. Cf. Acts 2, 42. *Philip Doddridge:* "O happy day that fixed my choice On Thee, my Savior and my God! Well may this glowing heart rejoice And tell its raptures all abroad." *Daniel Webster:* "The circle of family love must one day be broken up by death; but if its members are led to become Christians, it will be joined again and united to the great family of the redeemed and blessed in another world." (Works. Vol. 16, p. 682.) *William Jennings Bryan:* "Christ has made of death the starlit way that links the companionships of yesterday with the reunions of to-morrow." WALTER F. TROEGER.

The Augsburg Confession.

1 Tim. 6, 12.

The Diet of Augsburg, summoned by Emperor Charles V in 1530, was of utmost importance in the history of the Reformation. An imposing array of dignitaries was present. Two subjects claimed the special attention of the members: the Turkish invasion and the religious differences existing in Germany. Agreed to take up the latter first. Formal permission was given to the Protestant members

of the diet to present a written statement of their religious doctrines and of the abuses which they desired to have corrected. This document was ready.

In order to lay before the emperor a regular and authorized statement of the doctrines of the Lutherans, the Elector of Saxony had directed Luther to commit to writing the chief articles of their religious system. In compliance with this order he and Melanchthon and Justus Jonas prepared the Articles of Torgau. The seventeen Articles of Torgau were enlarged, and reduced to the definite form, and given the polish and elegance which they now possess, by the clear and eloquent pen of Melanchthon. Indeed, he was revising and retouching it to the last moment with the care and attention to minute accuracy which became such an important document. It had been submitted to, and approved by, Luther, who had been directed to stay in Coburg, as in a place of safety, and yet near enough to Augsburg to be regularly informed of the proceedings.

Next to the 31st of October, 1517, the 25th of June, 1530, the day of reading the Augsburg Confession, is the greatest day of the Reformation. Dr. Bayer read slowly, loudly, and distinctly, so that he was not only heard by every one in the room, but also outside the hall, in the courtyard below, every word could be clearly heard and understood. The reading lasted two hours. The effect which this public reading of the confession produced was remarkable. Some who had been wavering in their adherence to the cause of the Reformation were confirmed in their faith; others were greatly surprised at what they heard, having previously entertained the most erroneous ideas concerning the doctrines of Luther; and many who up to this period had heard much, but really knew little of his religious sentiments, were not only convinced of their innocence, but were moreover delighted with their purity and simplicity.

1. The Augsburg Confession a complete model of its kind.

A) *Scriptural.* The confessors acknowledged the Scripture to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practise. From that they drew their confession, and to its unerring testimony they appealed for the verification of the declarations it contained. "I am occupied with the matter day and night, thinking over it, revolving it in my mind, arguing, searching the entire Scriptures; and there grows upon me constantly that fulness of assurance in this our doctrine, that is, in its Scriptural verity." (Luther.) Some of its doctrinal statements are in the language of the Scriptures, and others are sustained by relevant proof passages. It carried conviction with it to candid minds at its first reading. It drew this acknowledgment from the Bishop of Augsburg: "All that the Lutherans have said is true, and we cannot deny it." When the Duke of Bavaria asked Eck: "Can you by sound reasons refute the con-

fession of the elector and his allies?" he replied: "With the writings of the apostles and prophets, no; but with those of the fathers and councils, yes." The duke's reply was: "I understand it. The Lutherans are in the Scriptures, and we are outside of them."

B) *Thoroughly Christian.* The confessors accepted the articles of the Ecumenical Creeds, declaring the existence and perpetuity of one holy Christian Church, consisting of the "body of true believers in all parts of the world, who have but one Gospel, one Christ, the same Baptism and Holy Supper and who are ruled by one Holy Spirit, although they have different ceremonies." In this Church they were born, baptized, and confirmed, and in it they desired to live, labor, and die. They came to Augsburg to consult about the best manner of preserving the truth and unity. They foresaw the evils of schism and labored to heal the breaches of Zion. They professed true loyalty to Christ and claimed the rights conferred upon all believers by the Word of God. They were not schismatics nor separatists, but advocates of Christian and ecclesiastical union. They declared that they had neither formed a new sect nor left the Church and protested, through their Confession, that they could not justly be condemned as errorists, nor excluded from the communion of the holy Christian Church.

C) *Protestant.* While not generally called so as yet, the Lutherans protested against the abuses in the Church of Rome and, in opposition to it, confessed the cardinal doctrine of the Bible, *justification by faith* (Art. IV), also the office of the ministry, the efficacy of the Sacraments, good works, and others; of practical differences they protested against the communion in one kind, the celibacy of the priests, the Romish confession, and others. The Augsburg Confession defined and established the principles of Protestantism, by discriminating them from Romanism. Jesus before Pilate, John 18, 37. Peter: Acts 4, 7—12.

2. *The adoption of the Augsburg Confession was the emancipation of the human mind from mental, spiritual, and civil thraldom.*

The Augsburg Confession is the great charter of liberty. For long ages before the Reformation, men groaned under the worst form of bondage. There was not liberty of conscience. Men were, in all respects, slaves, ground down under the heel of a most oppressive despotism. The rise of the Reformation was the upheaving of mind and conscience and the throwing off of the grievous burden that had for ages pressed them down. The adoption of the Augsburg Confession may be justly regarded, not only as the confession of faith of the Protestant princes, but also as their completed protest

against the usurpations of the despotism of the Romish Church. The seven concluding articles, on Abuses Corrected, which are much longer than the twenty-one doctrinal articles, utter a protest against ecclesiastical and other forms of despotism and assert the rights of man in language such as had not been heard for centuries before the Lutheran Reformation. By the adoption of this confession there was inaugurated a new era of civil and religious freedom, which has extended to our own times. It is the grand Magna Charta of Protestantism. It is another and an older and a higher Declaration of Independence.

3. The adoption of the Augsburg Confession is an enduring evidence of the Reformers' firm devotion to truth.

(This point is most admirably brought out in Prof. Graebner's anniversary booklet, published by the Concordia Publishing House, in the chapter, "Hearts of Oak." We also direct attention to the observation the author makes, that this was a laymen's movement.)

4. This Confession has for us, as members of the Lutheran Church, a peculiar interest and is cherished by us as a glorious and dearly prized inheritance.

"This confession of Augsburg," says D'Aubigné, a Calvinist, "will ever remain one of the masterpieces of the human mind, enlightened by the Spirit of God." If such is the estimate concerning it by a prominent member of another Church, what is the estimation in which it should be held by our Church, which has ever regarded it as her confession of the faith of God's Word? It is the oldest, the most ecumenical, and the most venerable of the Protestant confessions. No other Protestant confession has such a history as this, and no other is so officially and so intimately related to the general Reformation as this. It is to be regretted that any others at variance with it were introduced afterwards and that all who came out of Rome did not present a united front by rallying around this. As it is, by far the largest body of Protestant Christians in the world revere the Augsburg Confession as expressing their views of divine Scriptural truth. It is the cherished birthright of the Lutheran Church, which she will never be willing to part with. Any attempt to mutilate, change, or suppress it would be more criminal than the attempt to mutilate, change, or trample on, the Declaration of American Independence. The whole American nation would rise up as one man, with intense indignation, against any party that would aim at the degradation of that sacred charter of our liberties or in any way offer to it any insult or indignity. Should not the Lutheran Church be equally jealous of any attempt to offer any indignity to a document that has such a history, that utters such pure truth, and that has accomplished in the world such wonderful results as the Augsburg Confession? When we ponder on the days of danger our fathers of

the Reformation had to pass through and the strenuous efforts they had to make in order to give us this confession and consider its noble, Scriptural character, let us duly value it, thank God most fervently for it, and be zealous in its defense and loyal to its doctrines and principles. L. BUCHHEIMER.

Sermon after Attending Synod.

Acts 15, 3. 4.

Wherever we go, we hear the hum of human voices. To-day much is said about aviation and the radio. We are living in an age of great business enterprises. All about us we observe vast industrial and mercantile establishments, employing thousands of people. The newspapers are reporting gigantic mergers, and popular education is enabling just about all people to become acquainted with this progress. But most of what we hear is concerning earthly things. We Christians, however, are told: "Seek ye first," etc. Matt. 6, 33. Our text tells of those who did just that. And what I have experienced, seen, and heard in the last days, while attending the sessions of our Synod, gives us an excellent opportunity to do that, too, and therefore to speak of those heavenly things, of the kingdom of God. In speaking and hearing of God's business, we are taking an antidote against materialism and worldliness. May the Holy Spirit Himself enlighten and bless us as I now address you on that which is actually worth talking about: —

God's Wonderful Works in Our Synod.

1. *God has given us in our Synod men who are doing essentially the same work which the apostles did.*
2. *God is blessing this work.*

1.

A) Text. Explain why Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem. They did not come to speak of the new highways built by Caesar or of the latest victories of the Roman armies. They spoke of the proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles. Briefly narrate what had happened on Paul's first missionary journey.

B) In our Synod we have thousands of pastors, missionaries, and teachers, together with elders and other officers, who, supported by over a million laymen, are carrying on essentially the same work of which Paul speaks here.

Each congregation is proclaiming the pure Word, instructing youth, spreading Christian literature or periodicals, Luther's Catechism, books of devotion in the home, — each congregation is a workshop of the Holy Spirit. Each could relate stories of the wonderful things which God is doing in its midst.

And all are working together, recruiting our colleges and sem-

inaries, maintaining our Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis, Mo., and carrying on mission-work among the poor of our cities (city mission), among the scattered people of our land (home missions), and in far-off India, China, and South America. Besides we have our Indian Missions and Negro Missions.

C) It is true, we could not all be at the sessions of Synod to hear of all this in detail, even as not all the Christians could be at Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas, but those who were there rejoiced to hear. Let us be sure to read our publications, so that all our members may be informed what great things God is doing for us in our Synod.

D) How wonderful that from that time till this we have had such meetings! The synodical gathering which I attended was very much like the gathering which is described here, in this 15th chapter of Acts. Scarcely any one can attend such meetings without meeting with those whom he has known and hearing of the wonderful work that God is carrying on through them. But we also meet there those whom we have not known until now and learn of the work that they are carrying on in the mission-fields, in the educational institutions, in our congregations, in our publication business. And our chief source of joy is this, that in our Synod the same work is being done which was done in the Apostolic Church. The same Word is preached, the same Law, the same Gospel. The gifts differ, but there is one faith, one God, one Baptism. Eph. 2, 19—21; 4, 16. Indeed, all we who are joined to such brethren and are active and interested in such work have good cause to sing: Hymn 262.

2.

And God is blessing this work.

A) Speak of the marvelous success of apostolic activity, Acts 2; 6, 7; 9, 42. Text, v. 4. Acts 19.

B) Just so in our Synod, founded in 1847. Consult *Ebenezer,* by Prof. W. H. T. Dau, D. D., to be bought from Concordia Publishing House. Then speak of those things that impressed you at the last meeting which you attended, noting especially the blessing resting upon our activities in educational, mission, and publication affairs. Mention also the calls made upon us for work for which we have not the men and the means. Indeed, the net is full and near breaking. Luke 5, 6. 7. Should this not cause great joy among us and our brethren? Text, v. 3.

C) Certainly, tribulations, persecutions, sufferings, disappointments were also reported. But so much the more earnestly we ought to pray. Acts 4, 23—31. Oh, if we could report from our Church what Paul at one time related concerning the churches of Macedonia! 2 Cor. 8, 3—5. Let us therefore not be weary in well-doing. 1 Cor. 15, 58. Hymn 478.

F. OBERSCHULTE.

Mission-Work.

Rom. 1, 14—18.

Disarmament, that word has a familiar sound. It is the talk of the world. You hear it from pulpits and political platforms. It is certainly a very desirable thing that the nations should in some measure disarm. Think of the advantages. But do not carry this idea into the realm of religion. It is wrong to lay down the Sword of the Spirit. We must never quit fighting the battles of the Lord. If the Church would do that, it would go down to utter defeat. And that is our danger, to become indifferent, to stop fighting and laboring for the Lord. We must be awakened, roused, encouraged, to new efforts. This is done by the Word of God, such as is before us. Let us, then, be mindful of three facts: —

1. That we are debtors to lost mankind;
2. That we have the means to help them;
3. That the day of wrath is surely coming.

1.

A) Vv. 14. 15. Here St. Paul explains why he feels in duty bound to go to Rome and preach the Gospel. "I am a debtor," etc. It is true he was an apostle and had, therefore, a special call for such work. But that was not the only reason. He had something which the people at Rome did not have. They had many things Paul did not have, riches, power, commanding positions, splendid palaces, earthly wisdom. But one thing they had not, and Paul had it — the saving knowledge of the world's Savior. They were in spiritual darkness and hopelessness. The thought that there were millions without the Savior left him no peace, he felt it his duty, he felt constrained, compelled, to go to them.

B) We Christians are debtors to lost mankind. Upon us rests a tremendous responsibility. Our Lord tells us: "Ye are the light of the world." Go ye and preach the Gospel unto all nations. Thus he makes us, as it were, the saviors of the world. Jesus by His atoning death has prepared salvation for every one. And He has commanded us Christians to proclaim it. That is our debt to lost mankind. Do you feel this debt?

If you have no interest in the work of your Church, if you do not care whether we train ministers and teachers or not, etc., then you are not paying your debt to lost mankind. You are not minded as the apostle was. Repent and pray for forgiveness and a better knowledge of what the Lord wants you to do.

2.

We have the means of help.

A) Vv. 16. 17. Paul goes to Rome, the capital of the then known world, the seat of the mighty, the worldly-wise. He, a lone man,

known to only a few. But he is not afraid, because he knows what he has.

He has the Gospel. A divine message to the world, a message of God, wherein He tells the world of His divine love toward sinners. How He had His only-begotten Son prepare, by suffering and death, a righteousness for every one, a righteousness so complete that even the holiness of God is satisfied. And every one who has this righteousness will not perish, but have everlasting life. And this wonderful righteousness is revealed in the Gospel. It is freely offered through the Gospel. The Gospel contains it and brings it. And the offer is not conditional. The Gospel is not a message setting forth certain conditions under which such righteousness may be obtained. It is freely offered. And not only to a chosen few, but to everybody. It is accepted by faith.

But there is still more to be said about this wonderful Gospel. It is the power of God. Even though we are dead in sins, spiritually blind and unable to believe by our own power, the Gospel, being a power of God and the instrument of the Holy Spirit, will do its work. Wonderful Gospel. And therefore Paul was not afraid.

B) Friends, we have that same Gospel to-day. A Gospel rich in mercy, sweet and powerful. We have no reason to be disheartened. Only realize anew what a wonderful means God has given us to pay our debt to lost mankind. But remember there is not much time.

3.

The day of wrath is surely coming.

A) Vv. 18. The wrath of God is revealed in every evil that harasses mankind. But the final and last revelation of God's wrath will come at the end of the world. That will be from heaven. Then the Lord will appear in His divine majesty and judge the quick and the dead. Every one who then is without the righteousness of God which Jesus prepared and which is offered in the Gospel, will be condemned to everlasting darkness and anguish in hell.

B) And this day of wrath is coming; it may come at any time. Do we realize this solemn truth as we ought to? Do you realize it when you hear of the millions who as yet know nothing of their Savior? Ah, if we did, we would not be so slow in helping to spread the kingdom of God, to carry on the work of our Church.

Let us therefore be awake and realize anew that we are debtors to lost mankind, that we have the means to help, and that the day of wrath is coming soon. May our gracious Lord help us to remember it! Amen.

H. J. Bouman.

Reformation Day.

Ps. 119, 130.

History has indissolubly linked and joined these two — Luther and the Reformation. Who can think of Luther and not recall the Reformation? Who can speak of the Reformation and not mention Luther? The one invariably suggests the other.

I said that history had joined them, — God Himself joined them. God determined upon the work, and God Himself chose His instrument — that angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them, etc., Rev. 14, 6. 7.

But the man Luther and the historical event, the Reformation, are not only connected as the man and his work, there is another bond of union between them, — *both are fruits on the same tree.* They are both the product of the same power. That which made Luther made the Reformation, and that which made the Reformation made Luther. And whatever it was that made them, the products were colossal and stupendous. In a thousand years Luther is the mental and spiritual giant who outstrips all others, and the Reformation is that cataclysm which interrupted and made abortive a process of degeneration which had corrupted all society, — educational, political, and ecclesiastical, — in the rapidity of its operation and the extent of the interests which it involved almost unique in the annals of human affairs.

So wonderful, so immense, so overpowering, is all that is connected with Luther and the Reformation that, whenever we approach this man and this subject, we are in danger of making the mistake of those who gaze upon all this as people gaze at the strange things which they see in a museum. They wonder and stare, and they speak with astonishment of what they have seen; but they derive little or no genuine benefit from what they see. We want to avoid that mistake to-day. Our chief purpose to-day is not to praise Luther, — though we cannot help but honor him whom God has honored, — our purpose to-day is rather to appropriate to ourselves those blessings which God chose and chooses to bestow upon us through this man Luther and his work, the Reformation. With this purpose in view, let us now, on the basis of our text, ask and answer these two questions:

1. *Just what is it that made Luther what he was?*
2. *How did Luther accomplish all that he did for God and for mankind?*

1.

A) In order to answer the first question, we must briefly review Luther's life. I need fear no contradiction, no, not even from the camp of the most bitter enemies of Luther, when I say that Martin Luther was endowed by God, even in his very birth and nature, with extraordinary natural powers and gifts of body and mind. His

parents and others, *e. g.*, Mrs. Cotta, Staupitz, Frederick the Wise, etc., soon noticed that. He was a lad of exceptional mental brightness, of more than ordinary ability, of tenacious memory, of deep insight, acute judgment, and capable of sincere, deep feeling and strong attachments. Just as the mother of Moses quickly saw that he was a goodly child, so the parents of Luther soon recognized some of the talents of their first-born child. They bore bitter hardships and made painful sacrifices to give this boy of theirs a proper education and to fit him for a place worthy of his natural talents. We do not hear that they did as much for their other children. And Mrs. Cotta saw something in this boy Luther. We do not hear that she did for any one else what she did for little Martin. And the care bestowed upon this boy was not bestowed in vain. He passed from school to school till, a mere youth, he entered the highest school of the land, the university. There he was one of the brightest and most promising students. But right here, when hopes were to blossom into fruition, there came a frost, a chilling frost, which blighted the father's hopes and turned the young man from his course. Something happened that pained and disappointed the father. What was it? The evil fruits of the cruel superstitions which young Luther had imbibed in the Church began to manifest themselves. That bright and hopeful young man, that advancing scholar, that gifted student, had drunk in the poisonous draught of superstition and monasticism as taught by the Church of Rome.

The doctrine of salvation by works exerted its ruinous influence upon this youth. Even in his childhood it had robbed him of the joy and courage which should brighten the heart of every Christian child. And under the tyrannical sway of work-righteousness he became more and more a miserable wretch, tortured with all manner of harrowing fears. Tighter and tighter this incubus fastened upon the poor soul. More and more poor young Luther was driven from one fear to another, from one foolish effort to another, till in despair he gave himself up unreservedly to Rome and monasticism — he entered a cloister and became a monk. — Rome had schooled Luther and had perverted all his natural powers.

If ever there was a disciple and a scholar of the Roman system, it was Luther. And what did this doctrine of works make of that bright, hopeful, promising young man? Luther himself uses the most severe words when he speaks of this sad period of his life. He calls himself "the crazy saint," who believed every vile lie invented by the papal monks. (Here describe the tortures, the folly, the tyrannies suffered in body and soul by Luther, according to his biography. Do not overlook the experiences of his journey to Rome. Matt. 23. 15.)

B) If all this had continued, what would have become of the poor man? Madman, hypocrite, or tyrant. But praise God! God Him-

self interfered. God had chosen him to be the Reformer of the Church, and God knew the instrument through which He wanted to fashion and prepare this man for his work. That means and instrument was nothing else, and nothing less, than the Word of which our text speaks: "The entrance of Thy Word," etc. God brought Luther to the Word and the Word to Luther. And the Word of God exerted its influence upon this man. Is. 55, 10. 11. Text. The Word created thirst and quenched the thirst. Ps. 42, 1. 2. 11. The Word removed his superstitions with their harrowing fears. It relieved the tortures of his conscience. It broke the fetters which the doctrine of work-righteousness had fastened upon him. Of a moaning, whining, fasting, emaciated, miserable, dying, superstitious wretch, the Word of God made a courageous, singing, rejoicing, testifying preacher and teacher of God's Word, the Reformer of the Church, the liberator of Christendom, the forerunner of modern enlightenment, the author of thousands of blessings for body and soul and mind, the leader in school and Church, the prophet of the living God, the glorious hero and champion of the redeemed, who could face emperor, princes, archbishops, cardinals, and Pope and express his determination to fight it out with the help of God. "Here I stand," etc. His superstitions might have made him stand behind iron bars as a demented maniac, but now the Word had made him free, the Word had taught him the truth, the Word had given him light. Instead of being a persecutor at an auto da fe, he became the proclaimer of those good tidings of great joy which God has prepared for all people.

What is it that made Luther what he was? The text before us and the history of Luther's life give us the answer. This Book, this Word, this Gospel, made Luther what he was.

What has this Word done for you?

For you and for me this celebration is in vain if we are not partakers of the gifts of God which come to man through the Word, and through the Word alone.

2.

And now we are ready to answer the second question which we have proposed. How did Luther accomplish all that he did for God and for mankind?

A) What this one man accomplished, the work that he did and the results which he achieved, are such that it is impossible to narrate or describe them in the brief time allotted to one sermon. If we think of the rubbish which he cleared away and of the lasting treasures which he distributed, and would speak of them, — where begin, where end? The thousand years before Luther's time are known as the Dark Ages. There was *intellectual* darkness, there was *spiritual* confusion and ignorance, and there was *moral* corrup-

tion and perversion, caused by false instruction and erroneous teaching. (The pastor should prepare for this part of the sermon by reading the political, ecclesiastical, and educational history of the times.* He will not have time to give a survey of all, but the folly of the crusades, the constant contention between the Church and the State, — King Henry IV and Pope Hildebrand, — and the three Popes who opposed each other and spent the revenues of the Church may be mentioned, together with the superstition and ignorance of the people, the traffic in indulgences, and the corruption of the clergy.) If we remember that all this was supported by the wealth and power of the papacy and by the armies of kings, princes, and emperor, what a task to remove it!

B) Our text solves the mystery. Luther knew what the Word of God had done for him, and his confidence in this Word, his faith in it, was the victory which overcame the world. 1 John 5, 4.

It was not the science of Galileo, it was not the learning and philosophy of Erasmus, it was neither the sword of Sickingen nor that of Charles V, it was not the fanaticism of Carlstadt, it was not the "spirit" without the Word of the prophets of Zwickau, it was not the enormous wealth of the Fuggers, which brought light into those Dark Ages; it was that Word of which our text states, "The entrance of Thy Word," etc. It was the power of that same Gospel of which Paul said, "I am not ashamed," etc. Rom. 1, 16. Science did not rescue the Bible, but the Bible rescued science. The spirit in man did not reject superstition, but the Word of God lit up the spirit of man and drove out superstition. The power of the sword did not blaze a path for the Gospel, but the Gospel restored the power of the sword to the rightful possessor.

Last year we spoke of that marvelous production of Luther, his Catechisms, especially his Small Catechism, the only text-book of the schools that has lasted for four hundred years; but this little marvel is simply an extract from the Bible. It is the essence of this Word of God. This year we are celebrating the quadricentennial of the public reading of the Augsburg Confession on the 25th of June, 1530. That Augsburg Confession is still the great unrefuted confession of all true prophets and preachers of Christ. Acts 4, 24; 10, 43; Matt. 16, 16. Think of Luther's translation of the Bible. Think of Luther's hymns and the hymns of other religious poets which followed. Think of the Reformation in Germany, in Denmark, in Norway, in Sweden, in Hungary, in England, in Scotland, in Holland. Think of all the Bible translations which followed. The emancipation of the schools. Think of the religious liberty which we have here in our own country. The sly and jeering ridicule of Erasmus drove some to unbelief and

* *The Voice of History*, by Martin Sommer, or *The Dark Ages*, by Th. Graebner.

others to bitter rejoinders, but it did not bring light to God's people. God's Word, once more proclaimed and pointed to by Martin Luther, that brought the light.

Luther himself was well aware of that. And he favored education because education enabled the people to hear, to learn, to read, God's Word, and God's Word enables us to know the truth about God's creation. It is therefore, and has always been, the true foundation for genuine, scientific advancement and learning.

We thank God, therefore, to-day that He gave us such a staunch lover, preacher, and defender of His Word as this man Luther. But we thank Him much more that He has given us grace to know, to learn, to love, and to appreciate this Word. Let us take to heart John 8, 31. 32. Hymn 276, 4. S.

Thanksgiving Day.

Ps. 105, 1—5.

The very fact that men must be told to be thankful testifies to the ingratitude of man. If we were all as thankful as we should be, it would not be necessary for any one to tell us: O give thanks! Forget not the benefits which you have received. Like love, thanksgiving is not something that can be produced in us by commanding and driving. It must be a natural growth, an overflowing appreciation of the manifold and untold blessings of God.

But, alas! such gratitude is not to be found among men. Mankind is an ungrateful race. Is. 1, 2. 3. Through his own sin and wickedness man brings misery and misfortune upon himself, and then he increases his guilt by refusing to give thanks to God and by accusing God. Gen. 3, 12; 4, 13. 14. But though ingratitude is so general, it is nevertheless shameful. Is. 1, 3. We must flee from it. And we have come here to-day not simply to give thanks upon this Thanksgiving Day, but to be cleansed from our ingratitude and to be filled with thanksgiving, so that throughout the entire year we may offer unto God thanksgiving. With this purpose in mind, let us pray the Holy Spirit to bestow upon us grateful hearts through the words of our text.

A Grateful Heart.

1. How is it obtained?

A) Not by a self-righteous appraisal of our own works and merits.

Our text by its very silence concerning man and his works and merits testifies that those who pride themselves upon their accomplishments, virtues, and deserts will never obtain a grateful heart. How can they? We certainly will not thank some one else for that which we ourselves have earned, won, and gained through our own efforts,

sacrifices, and self-denials. Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. 4, 29—31. Pride in our own achievement excludes genuine gratitude. And since no one is as successful as he wishes to be, since some tears, some misfortune, some distress, falls to the lot of all, these self-righteous people who are convinced that they deserve much and ought to be rewarded according to their own merits become dissatisfied, embittered, disgruntled, and ungrateful. No matter how much they gain, they are persuaded that they have deserved more. Every setback, every ill turn in their own affairs, arouses their resentment. They have no confidence in the goodness and mercy and grace of God. By and by, even here in this life, many of them discover that their own merits are mere counterfeits, and then dissatisfaction and despair lay hold upon them. Such were Cain, Saul.

Even David (Ps. 73) and Peter (Matt. 19, 27) were in danger of this self-righteous ingratitude. All who are in love with their own goodness and their own merits can never join the psalmist here in our text in praising God. If they do, it is mere external lip-service. In their innermost hearts they build an altar over which hangs their own photograph, and before this altar they pray. There they utter in their thoughts such a prayer as this: "I, I, I, John Smith, what a wonderful man I am! Against what difficulties have I struggled! What obstacles have I overcome! What success have I accomplished! How beautifully I am adorned with all manner of virtues! How much better I am than all my fellow-beings! If the world only knew of the genuine value, the precious qualities, the priceless abilities, that are in me! The ungrateful and selfish fools of this earth do not know me; but one there is who knows and appreciates what there is in me of richest quality, that is I myself, and I will daily worship at this shrine of my own precious self." Even though no one actually builds such altars to himself, yet this kind of fine idolatry lives in the hearts of an unnumbered multitude. That is the explanation of ungrateful hearts. No, —

B) If we are to have a grateful heart, we must obtain it in the manner which our text proposes to us, *i. e.*, by contemplating God, the Source of all our blessings. His name and His works must be the subject of our meditation. Our text tells us: "Remember God's marvelous works that He hath done, His wonders and judgments; glory in His holy name, talk ye of all His wondrous works." By telling us to *remember* His marvelous works it indicates that true gratitude is first of all a matter of the heart. That is important for us, especially, who attend church and who are accustomed to sing: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." It is so easy to repeat such words again and again without being deeply impressed with the truth of what we are saying. Let us remember that even he who has made the most beautiful thanksgiving hymns that have ever been sung on this earth, David,

was in danger of becoming ungrateful, in danger of merely repeating the praises of God with his lips. Let us therefore be on our guard that at all times when we glorify God in words the sentiment of our hearts may be in harmony with the utterance of our lips. Let us therefore remember, *actually remember,* the marvelous works of God. Think of the wonders of creation, the beauties of it, which have inspired painters and poets, the most gifted of whom have tried in vain to picture in color and song what they saw in creation. Ps. 106, 2.

To-day, especially, we are to think of the almost unlimited wealth, resources, riches, and possibilities of this our glorious country. The Jews were reminded of the riches and advantages of their little country of about four hundred square miles, Deut. 8, 7—14. Only a good-sized county of our State. What are we to say of the immense territory which God has given to us and to our children here in the greatest and richest country of this earth? What variety of climate, what abundance of products, fruits, vegetables, grain, nuts, herbs, and trees! What prairies, what mountains, what forests, what rivers, what seas, has God provided for us here! It is impossible to recount all our advantages. The one language which is spoken and is respected everywhere on this earth. The literature, the schools, the libraries, not to speak of the glorious religious and political liberty which we are enjoying under our free government. And all this without any merit of our own. God's work, God's gift, God's blessing! Should that not stir the heart of all of us to give thanks to that gracious God from whom all these blessings flow?

And then remember what God has done for you personally. Think of the parents He gave you, the husband, the wife, the children, the Church, the school, your health. Think of the days and years in which He has sustained you, the happiness He has bestowed upon you. Ps. 116, 12.

Above all let us not forget His marvelous work done for us through the redemption of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ. We deserve damnation, He took it from us. Is. 53, 4. 5. Second Article.

How patiently has He sought you, reproved you, forgiven you, drawn you to Himself and to the Father, bestowed upon you His Holy Spirit, granted you His means of grace in Word and Sacrament. Third Article. Who that sincerely believes and honestly contemplates all these works and deeds of our gracious God would not be filled with gratitude? In such contemplation, such consideration, a grateful heart is created in us, as was created in Jacob when he said: Gen. 32, 10. That moved David to utter those words of humble gratitude: 2 Sam. 7, 18—29. That moved Paul to give thanks almost in every one of his epistles. Rom. 1, 8; 1 Cor. 1, 4; 2 Cor. 1, 3; Eph. 1, 3; Phil. 1, 3, etc.

Would you have a grateful heart which makes sweet melody unto

the Lord for all His benefits and blessings, then remember God's wonderful works, come to His sanctuary, where they are spoken of, partake of the Sacrament frequently, where you are assured by God Himself, in the strongest manner possible, that He has given you His richest blessings and whereby you are also assured that He will withhold no real and lasting blessing from you. Rom. 8, 32.

But let us not overlook the other part of our text, which tells us of

2. The expressions to which our grateful heart should move us.

A) V. 1. If true gratitude fills our hearts, we should at every possible occasion appear here in God's house to join the congregation in hymns of praise, and by our appearance also to stimulate our pastor to do his work with joy and with gratitude to God.

B) Indeed, the services of God's house should not suffice us. We should give thanks in our homes. V. 2: "Talk ye of all His wondrous works." Family devotion, private devotion. Our whole conduct, demeanor, behavior, and conversation should be that of a grateful Christian.

C) We should gladly and willingly and gratefully contribute to the work which makes known God's wonderful works to all men, whereby ungrateful wretches are changed into thanksgiving children of God. Mission-work. Synodical work. Circulation of Christian literature and periodicals, not even forgetting to guard the mottoes, calendars, and pictures with which we adorn our homes. Be sure that they suggest to us and others God's praises. Even our Christmas cards, birthday cards, and the like, should always give all glory to God and show forth His praises. Text, v. 1.

Keep thy heart, therefore, with all diligence. Do not allow it to become a murmuring, discontented, self-adoring, self-righteous workshop of Satan, but give the Holy Spirit every opportunity to fill it with the remembrance and the thoughts of God's glory, holiness, and goodness. Talk of His wondrous works, sing His praises, call upon His name, make known His deeds, contemplate His mercies, so that, instead of the despair of Cain and Judas and Saul, you may feel the gratitude of David and of him who sang: Hymn 62, 1. S.

Confessional Address.

Col. 2, 14.

Dear Father in heaven, we appear before Thee, desiring to be led into Thy truth, the truth about our pitiful condition and about our salvation. Grant us, then, that through the contemplation of Thy Word our eyes be opened anew as to our sinfulness and helpless-

ness and we be again encouraged to cling to our Savior Jesus Christ. Strengthen thus, we beseech Thee, our faith and imbue us with new vigor in Thy blessed service. We ask this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

This text with its striking imagery grips our soul, it stimulates thought, it compels self-examination. It hints at a gloomy prison, a handwriting that keeps the door locked and bars the way to liberty. We also hear the sounds of a mighty battle and the strains of the song of victory, a victory in our favor, a victory by which that awful handwriting is destroyed, the gates of our prison opened, and the prisoners set free. Let us endeavor to find the thoughts the Holy Spirit desires to convey.

The Handwriting that Was Against Us.

1. It was of ordinances. *2. It is taken out of the way.*

1.

The holy writer speaks of a handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us. This suggests debts that must be paid, conditions which must be met. It is something that is against us, it separates us from God, it effectually blocks our way to happiness, it is contrary to us, it pursues us, it will hound us into utter misery. This handwriting tells of guilt, it reminds us of the curse of God.

And this handwriting is of ordinances. These are God's ordinances. God's holy Law consists of many different ordinances, by which God would regulate the activities of mind, will, and heart, thus also the activities of all the members of our body. What our mind should think, our will should strive for, and our heart should harbor, what our eyes should see, our ears should hear, our mouth should speak, what our hands should do, where our feet should walk, all is covered by these ordinances.

And they approach us with the highest authority and inexorably demand perfect obedience. They sternly threaten dire reprisals.

By these ordinances God would promote and insure our welfare and complete happiness. Therefore we should love them, we should delight in following the way they point out to us.

But, alas, these ordinances we have not kept! Not a single one of them. All our thoughts, words, and deeds were the opposite of what they should have been. Indeed, our whole nature is in a state of rebellion against these ordinances of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Even we Christians, who know better, who have been regenerated, must say that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

This explains the handwriting that was against us which was contrary to us. Thus it came to pass that there was such a dreadful

handwriting against us. And we are here now to confess that we realize this, realize our corruption and helplessness. We are here as poor, miserable, sinful beings humbly to throw ourselves into the arms of mercy. And we confidently expect a full pardon. How dare we do that? Where do we find the courage for this petition? In the fact that the handwriting was taken out of the way.

2.

Let us fix our eyes on one little word. A word containing only three letters. It is the word "was." The handwriting *was* against us, but is no more; it *was* contrary to us, but is no more. "Was" is the past tense. Blessed past tense. It tells of debts having been paid, of conditions having been met. If the handwriting belongs to the past, then it does no more exist. And that means that the door of our prison is open, that the way to heaven and happiness is unobstructed, that the curse is gone, that God is reconciled. And this message also comes to us with the highest authority, with divine assurance. We have it on the highest authority that there is nothing against us, nothing contrary to us, any more; the Supreme Court has passed the sentence: Not guilty.

How did that come to pass? The holy writer speaks of a handwriting blotted out, destroyed, of a handwriting taken out of the way, put aside. But how was it done? How could God take that handwriting out of the way and destroy it and yet remain truthful and holy? We find the solution of this problem in these words: "Nailed to the cross." The handwriting was nailed to the cross. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." God's own Son took that handwriting and made it His own and rendered payment in full. As our Substitute He met every condition, observed every ordinance, suffered and died on the cross. Thus, with His holy, precious blood He blotted out that handwriting, He utterly destroyed it. At the foot of the cross on Golgotha there lies that handwriting blotted out.

Now there is a full pardon for all. And this pardon is brought to us by the means of grace. We are able to assure every sinner that Christ has blotted out that handwriting. We can offer it to him by the word of absolution. We can invite him to the table of the Lord, where the body and blood of our Savior is given in, with, and under the bread and wine as a token and pledge that payment is made in full, that the handwriting is blotted out.

Such assurance will strengthen our faith and infuse new zeal and vigor to walk the way of the Lord. With the song in our hearts: Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all our sins, we will return to our fields of labor in the service of our merciful God. May God grant it! Amen. H. J. Bouman.

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